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HINTS AND HELPS  
FOR THE  
CHRISTIAN LIFE

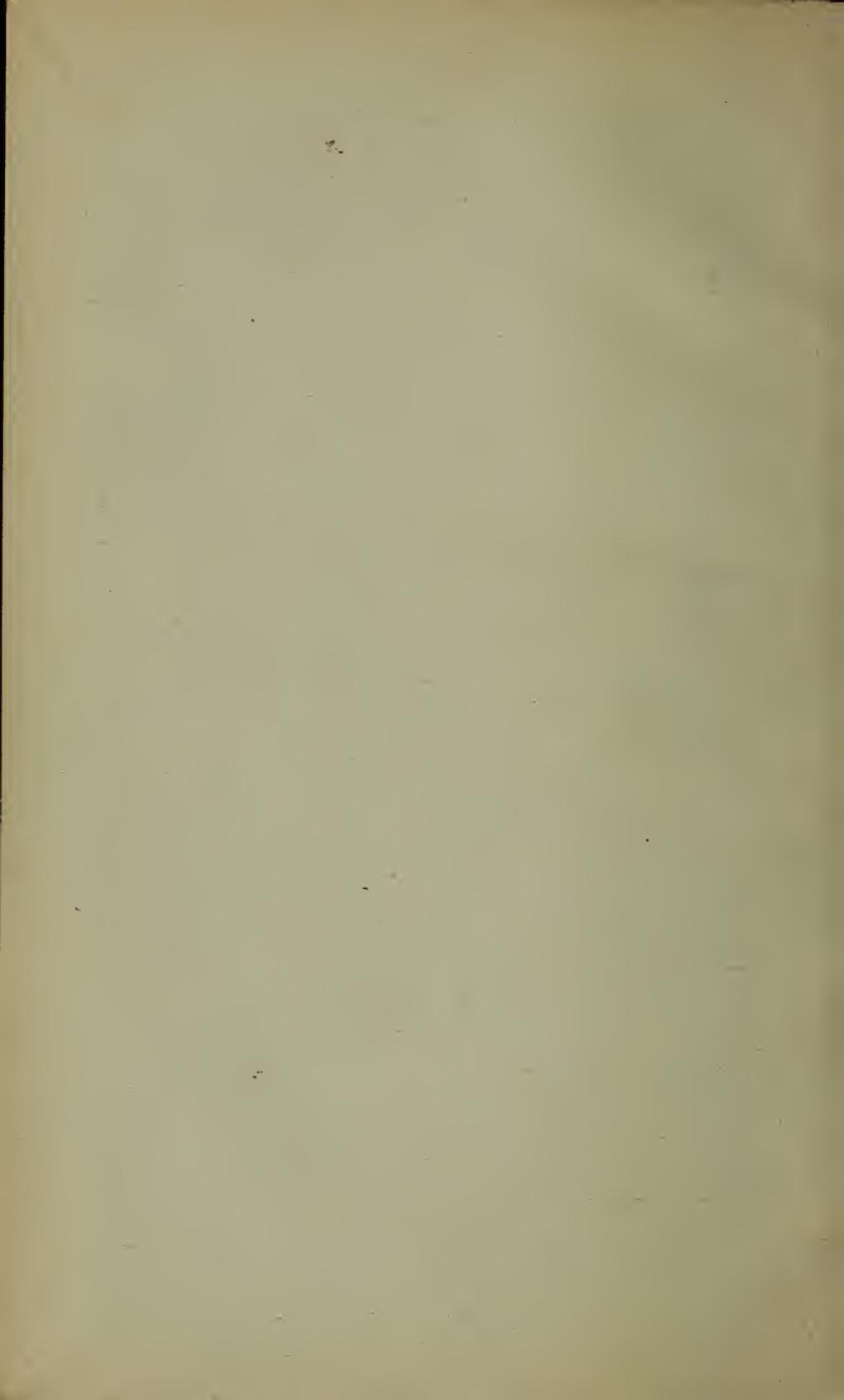
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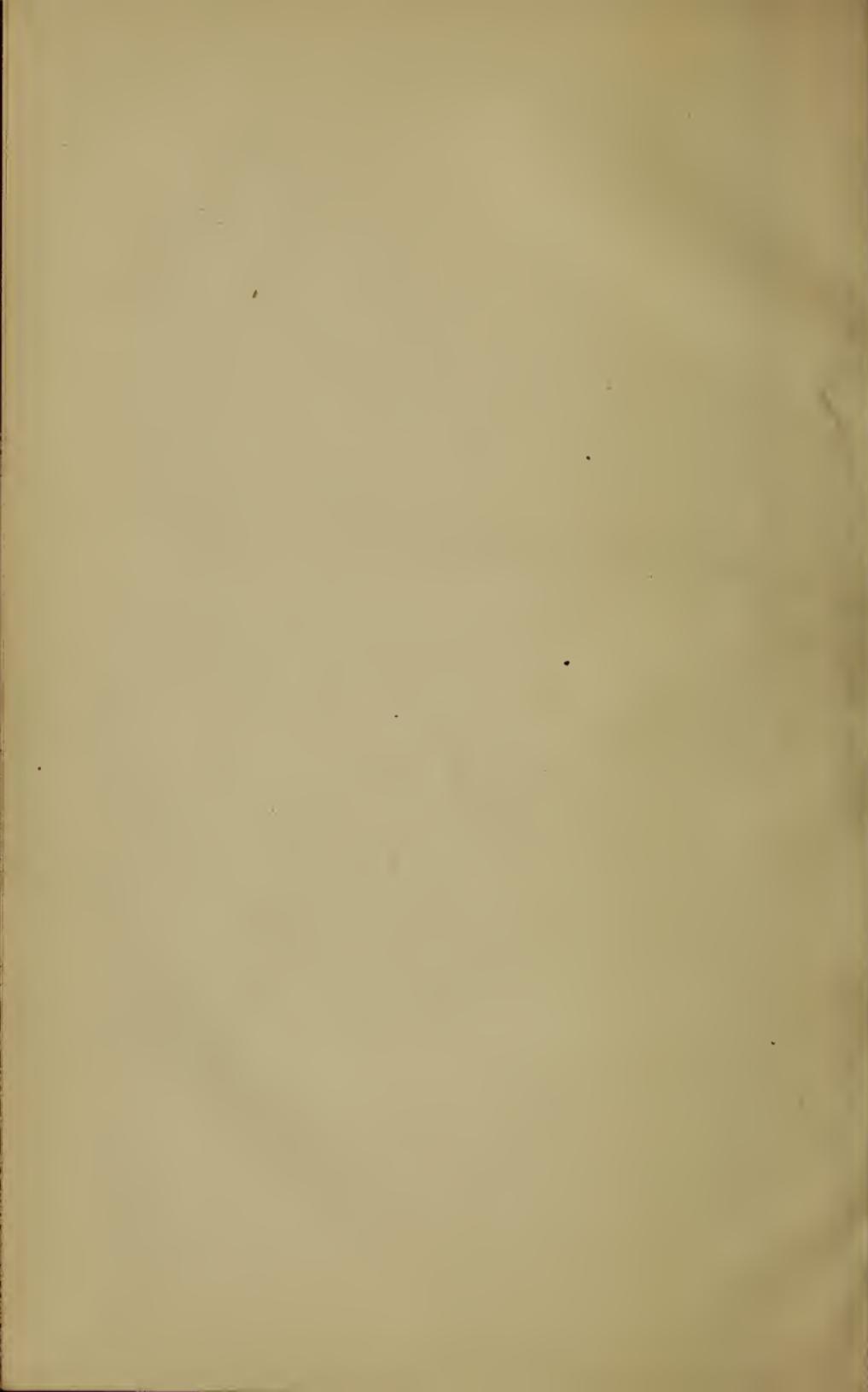
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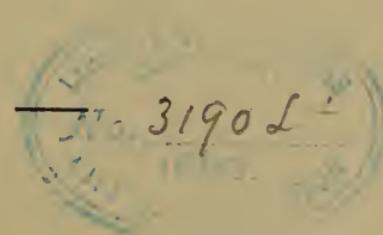
# Hints and Helps

FOR THE

# Christian Life.

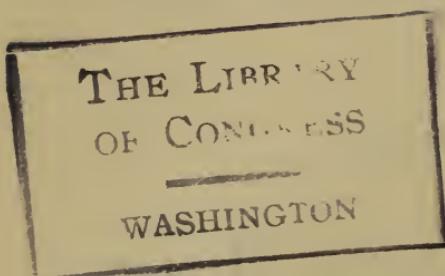
BY

WAYLAND HOYT, D. D.



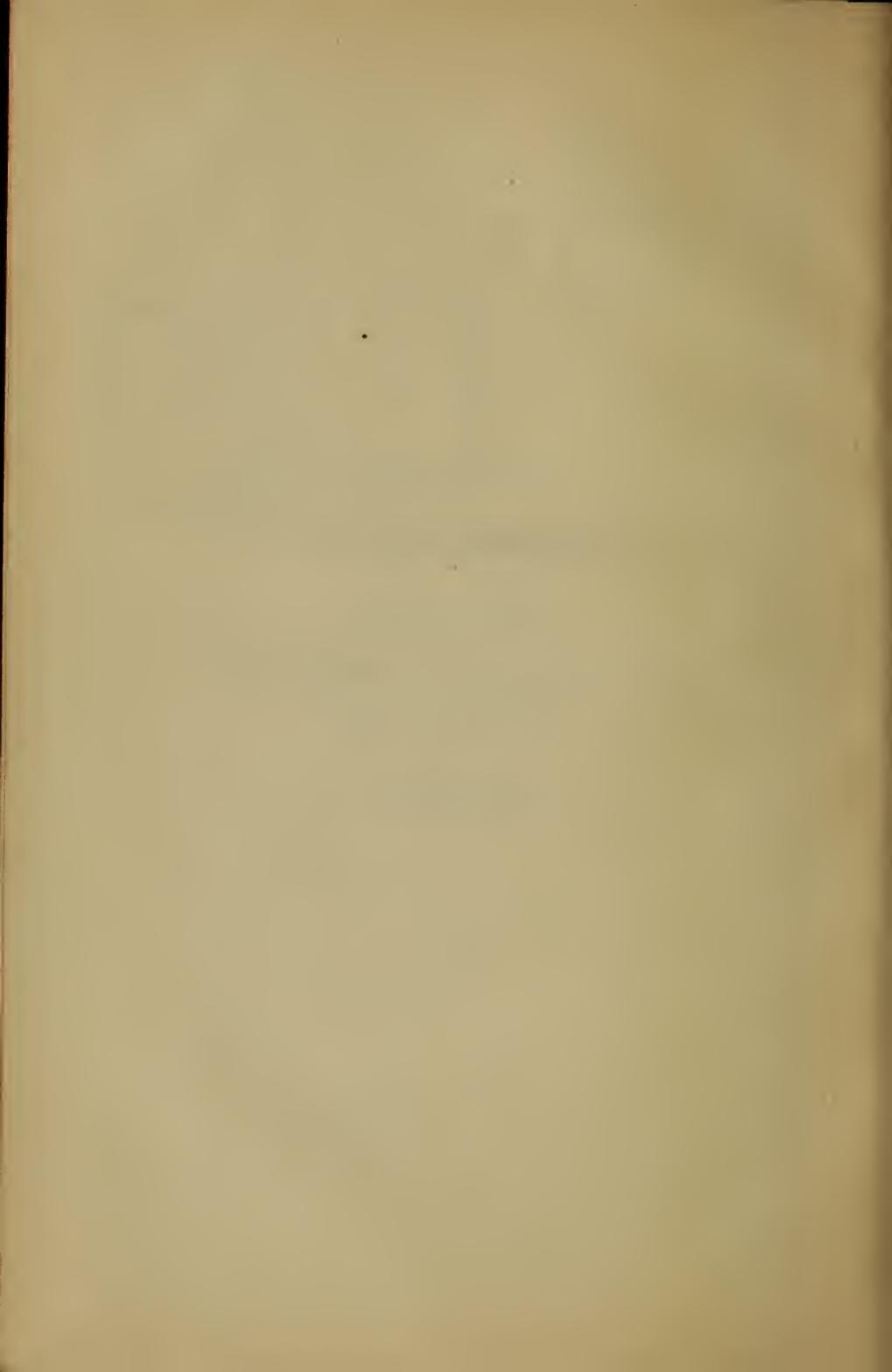
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1880



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TO MY MOTHER,  
WHOSE SWEET PERSUASIONS  
TURNED MY FEET  
INTO THE PATHS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE,  
THIS LITTLE BOOK  
IS DEDICATED.



**I**N the making this small volume I have had in mind the hour of quiet and devotion. From among many articles which I have contributed to the religious press, I have grouped these, specially bearing upon the principles and the practice of the Christian Life. That Life needs nurture. That some may find at least suggestions of that nurture in these pages, is my hope and prayer.

WAYLAND HOYT.

BROOKLYN, N. Y., Feb., 1880.



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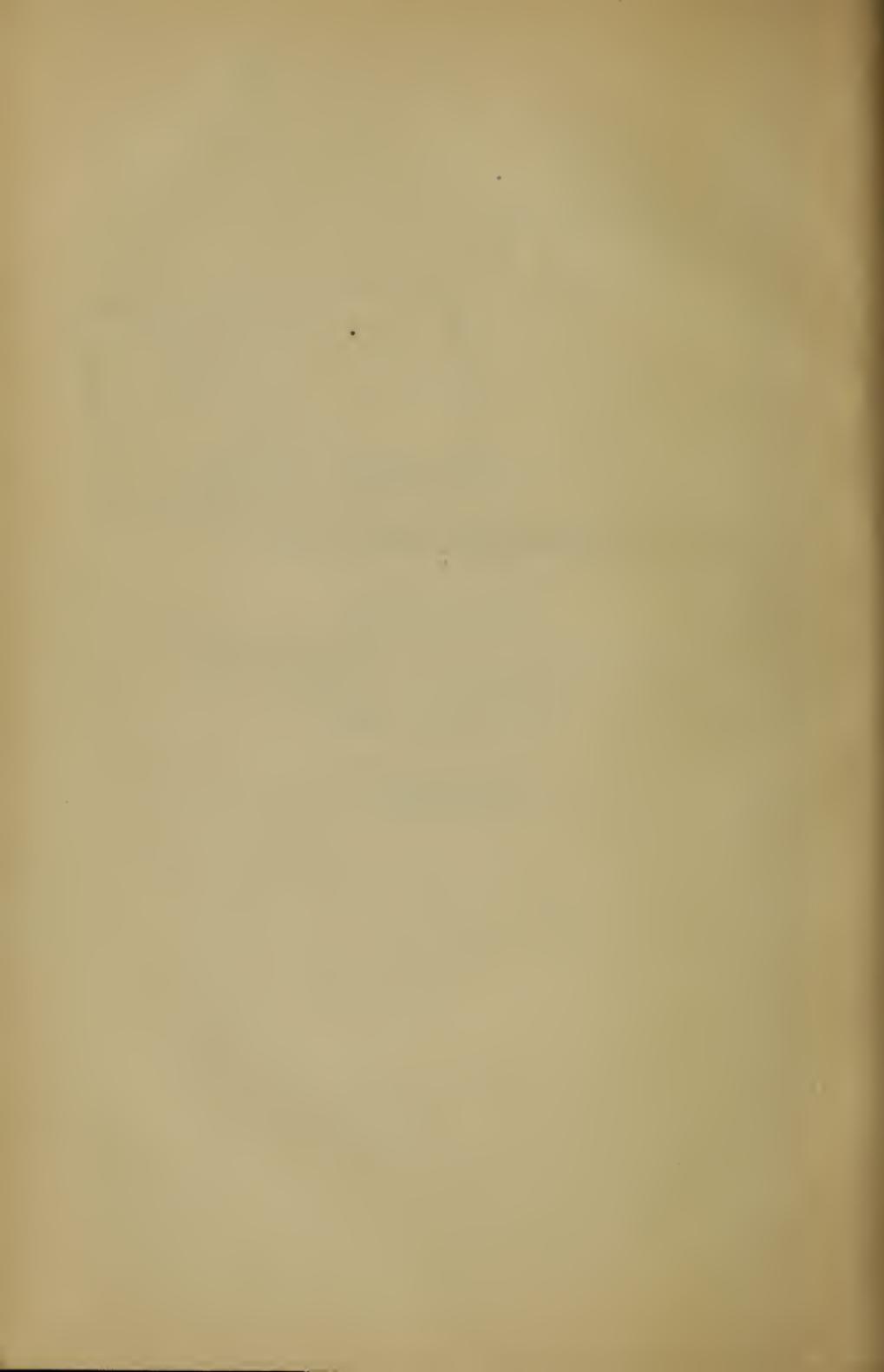
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## *THE NEARNESS OF GOD IN CHRIST.*

**G**OD is beyond my comprehension. His glory is like the sun, too dazzling for my vision. If I were to be admitted into His direter presence I should be smitten down and confounded. Even the seraphim can only endure the blazing of His close light as they reverently veil their faces with their wings. When I think of God—the Absolute, the Infinite—I can only say, “Thy knowledge is too wonderful for me.” “Thy judgments are a great deep.”

There are some plants which grow right up, in their own sturdy self-sufficiency. There are others which can only clasp and climb. The human soul is like the clinging plant ; it droops except there be some strong trellis to uphold it.

In order that my soul grow loftily it



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In order that my soul grow loftily it

must have some near, yet high, support which, with its poor faculties, it may lay hold on.

What do I need, then? I need God near me; God brought somehow, and in some measure, into the terms of my comprehension.

Talk to me of abstract powers, of abstract holiness, of abstract love, and I will listen to you, but I cannot altogether understand you. Perhaps you do not quite understand yourself.

Show me Divine power actualized, show me Divine holiness personified, show me Divine love throbbing in a heart like mine, and all is real and lowered to the level of my little thought. I can cling to that. I feel myself lifted toward the Throne as I lay hold of that.

Christ is so much to me because He brings God thus near me; He is Deity in humanity. He is God become Brother. Thus he shows me God.

See, in but a single direction, how He shows to us the Divine love, and brings

that close to us. Go to the tops of the highest mountains ; dive to the bottom of the deepest sea ; plunge down dark mines, toward the earth's center ; and you cannot find a spot where the atmosphere which surrounds us, and blesses us, and in which we live, has not gone before you. It is thus with the Divine love. Everything in life is wrapped with it and penetrated by it. I get certainty of this because Christ makes the Divine love real and near to me. See : the birth of every babe is made sacred by His own birth; the wedding joy is sanctified and sent on in stronger pulses by His presence; childhood nestles beneath His benediction ; the least touch of want, but upon the utmost fringe of His garment, unloosens the stream of loving help ; when the sisters bewail their brother, the eyes of Christ are dimmed with tears ; when the nails tear Him and the thorns wound Him, love finds excuse in ignorance, and Christ prays for his murderers—Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And the tragedy upon the Cross is but the

truth of the Divine love written in the red and awful characters of a Divine sacrifice.

Thus God's love I become aware of, sure of, in Christ. He is brother. He interprets it to me. He makes it real. He brings it close.

Thus, as well in other directions, I come to know God in Christ. Christ tells us who our God may be. Even my finiteness can lay hold of Christ. I am not left to vague and trying thought about the Infinite and Absolute—about Force and Law. I hear His words, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," and in that vision my soul is satisfied.

## *CHRIST'S FEELING TOWARD US.*

THE martyrdom of Stephen teaches us a most precious fact. I think the representation wonderfully beautiful and suggestive. There are the Sanhedrim, angry and violent with hate at Stephen for his brave, calm witnessing. The assembly is smitten with passion, as the tempest smites the sea to waves. There is no longer the semblance of decorum and self-control. They gnash at him with their teeth.

And there is Stephen, as careless of all their raging as the stars are of the dashing of the ocean waves. His thoughts are elsewhere ; his gaze is elsewhere. He is caught with the shining of a great vision. Its brightness falls upon his face, and it looks, amid all the trouble and the crisis, as it had been an angel's face. The veil which

usually hides heaven from our dim human eyes, is drawn aside for him. He sees all the glory. It is given him to look upon the burning radiance of the throne of God. But he sees more than that. He sees that very Messiah, that very Son of Man, who lately had been crucified, in whose name and for whose sake he had been so courageously witnessing in the presence of the angry Sanhedrim, "standing on the right hand of God."

The attitude in which Stephen sees the Son of Man is most significant. In the other Scriptures, where the glorified Son of Man is spoken of, He is represented as sitting, rather than as standing, at God's right hand. (Col. 3, 1; Heb. 1, 3.) But, amid these opened heavens into which Stephen looked, the Son of Man is standing, as though stirred with interest in behalf of Stephen; as though alert with sympathy for him; as though waiting to bid him welcome into his own presence. Standing—that is the attitude of interest in one, and activity for one.

And, lest we should think that all this

was some wild figment of Stephen's brain—lest we should be led to say, Oh, it is only a picture which his imagination painted, stirred into high daring by the excitement of the time—lest we should think it altogether subjective with Stephen—a dream, a thought, a phantasy, and clothed with no garments of objective realness, we are expressly told that Stephen was "full of the Holy Ghost" as he looked up steadfastly into heaven. The Spirit of truth was in him, and therefore he said the truth.

Now all this representation here is singularly beautiful and significant. It means, I am sure, what Chrysostom long ago said it meant, that the glorified Son of Man had risen from His throne to succor His persecuted servant and to receive him to Himself. It means that at the very point of the stony crisis which was closing around the brave and faithful witnesser, though he was lonely from every human help, and the helpless center of the fiery scorn of all those raging Jews, there was one heart that beat for him, there was one hand stretched out to

help him, and that the hand and heart of Him who upholds all things by the word of His power, whom if one have on his side he can well afford to be even in the minority of one, against the world.

This then is the lesson which the scene teaches us—the alert interest of the Lord Jesus in us at every moment of our brave witnessing for Him; at every time of our steadfast standing; in every fierce fight with temptation; in every period of our loneliness. Others may desert us, be careless of us, be even angry and threatening toward us, think us only fit for stoning; but He who upholds all things by the word of His power, knows us, notices us, is eager in his interest on our account.

Such a revelation as this of the real and special and tender thought of us by the central Heart of the universe, is the disclosure of the very thing which the heart of man deepest needs and most cryingly calls for. It is this which has been the strength of the noblest deeds the world has ever seen: of Polycarp in his flame; of Perpetua

welcoming the beasts which sprang to tear her; of William of Orange, standing against the hosts of Philip the Second; of Washington at Valley Forge; of Garrison in his fight for freedom; of all true human helpfulness and reform which has lifted the world onward and made it wear a kindlier face; this—that somehow God was standing for one and on one's side, and would not Himself desert, though men might, when brave witnessing must be done for Him.

It is only from the Bible and from the answering instincts of the human heart that you can get this revelation. You cannot get it from nature. That speaks to you only of law, and not love. The flames will burn Polycarp as quickly as the worst felon. The beasts will tear the Christian Perpetua as ragingly as any heathen criminal. The stones will smite down Stephen, witnessing for his Lord, as relentlessly as they will any foul adulterer. Nature says Law. The revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Scripture says Love—an infinite heart, a helpful hand, an inner strength, making Stephen's

stoning his coronation, opening a welcome for him when the stones have done their work.

This is what we need, this is what we cannot get on without—this *certainty* that there is no cold carelessness of us there at the throne of God, but an alert interest for us and a loving sympathy. This is the resource of a Christian witnessing and courage—that the Master cares, loves, regards, applauds.

## *GRACE SUFFICIENT FOR US.*

Far away in the wilds of the great West, amid that tangle of tortuous ridge and valley which marks the Divide of the Continent, towers a mighty mountain. Whenever a Mexican sees that mountain, he removes his hat and gazes reverently. It is no wonder that he does. It is a sight deeply suggestive of religious feeling. For, far up on that mountain's flank where it meets the sky and where the clouds often come down to rest, there have been wrought, by wrench, of earthquake and prying of the frost and beating of the tempest, two great gulches, running athwart each other precisely as do the two portions of a cross. And, in the summer weather, when the other snow from the mountain sides has melted somewhat, and has left behind itself the green of the trees and the solemn purple of the naked rocks—*this* snow, protected in these deep

cross-like gulches, remains through the summer's heat, shining still. And so you see, far up amid the sky and clouds, and set amid the green and purple of the trees and rocks, sculptured upon that mountain side, as if by the hand of God Himself, a vast, white, gleaming cross. Those who have seen it have told me there is no sight more grand, and beautiful, and subduing amid all the wonders of those mountain wilds. This is the name it carries, most appropriately—the Mountain of the Holy Cross.

When men seek a path through those twisted valleys, and must master steep ridge after steep ridge, and must often turn upon their tracks to get on at all, and wind about, now toward this point of the compass, and now toward that—that by which they must travel and which shall prevent them from getting lost, is the great landmarks of the country—the mountains running in such trend and of such shape on either side. This mountain of the Holy Cross is such a landmark, most conspicuous. Many a poor bewildered pilgrim, catching sight of those

white arms stretched out on that mountain side, has recognized his whereabouts and pressed on with fresh courage and with certain step toward his journey's end. He could not be lost now, for did it not stand right in his vision — that unmistakable Mountain of the Holy Cross.

As you have gone on in life, and thought of the past behind you and the future you confront; of the twisted, winding ways of life through which you have already gone; of the deep valleys of disappointment into which you have been pushed; of the steep ridges of difficulty up which you have been forced to climb; of the paths so often hindered by some mountain inaccessible, turning upon themselves and seeming to lead backward instead of forward; as you have tried to look ahead and see what the future holds, and wondered what in the world would meet you there, where the mists drop down so thickly; as you have waited thus for a little, and thought of life, its ups and downs, its sins, its cares, its responsibilities, its mistakes—has it never seemed to you as

though you were like a pilgrim lost amid the mountains, as though you were failing to recognize the landmarks, as though you knew hardly what to do or where to turn, and have you not prayed and looked and waited for some lifted and certain and satisfying Mountain of a Holy Cross to guide you surely on your way? Can you not imagine how a traveler, lost amid those mountains and going onward, he knows not exactly where, and turning some rocky corner and coming suddenly into sight of that great white cross, and so, because it was there, finding his way here—can you not imagine how such a traveler would rest in the vision of that great cross and say to himself, “That is something certain; that cannot fail me; I know I shall get on rightly now!” How sufficient for him, the steady shining of that gleaming cross. Thinking of the past and future, there is for us a waymark for life as certain and as sufficient as is that mountain to the bewildered traveler. This is our Mountain of the Holy Cross, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” We can rest in

that. We can guide our way by that. We can get courage and hope from that.

Get the right idea from the words, "*And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee.*" As they are translated in our English version, they yield the thought that the Lord said it once to Paul and then stopped saying it—just as though the traveler in the mountains should get one glimpse of the Holy Cross and then never a glimpse again. But such is not the tender and delicate meaning of the Greek. It tells us not only that the Lord had said it at one particular time, but that He was now going on saying it. He has said it; He is saying it now; it is a constant saying for every hour and every day and every month and every year. It is the traveler going on his way beneath the safe and constant shadow of the Mountain of the Holy Cross. He sees it not once only; he may see it every time he lifts his eyes. What a grand, steady, satisfying, sufficient waymark it is for anybody who will turn his eyes to it,—this, that God keeps on saying to us, "*My grace is sufficient for thee.*"

## *CHRIST WITH US.*

WE think of our Christ too much as we think of the dead heroes; as one who has lived, has wrought a mighty work, has left the world. We ought the rather constantly to think of Him not only as the one who has done something for us, but as he who is now doing; not only as the one who has lived, but as he who is now living; not only as the one who has been in the world, but as he who is now in it just as utterly as when the dust of Palestine fell upon his blessed feet. We ought to think of Him as a veritable, vital, vitalizing, personal presence with us.

Standing in the crypt of the Cathedral of St. Paul's in London, your eye is attracted by a huge mass of porphyry, to gain which they searched the continent of Europe.

They wanted something large, massive, grand. At length they came upon it in Cornwall, England. They cut it, shaped it, polished it, at last lifted it upon its plinth of Aberdeen granite, and dedicated it as the tomb of their grandest man. On one side you read the inscription, "Arthur, Duke of Wellington, born May 1, 1769; died September 14, 1852." A great man was buried when they buried him. His hand had been for many a year on the helm of the British Empire. His influence remains, indeed, but his personality has departed. In these difficult times, confronting England in the sense of personal presence she cannot have the Iron Duke.

Pass beyond the Channel and in Paris take your place beneath the golden dome of the Hotel des Invalides, and behold the most magnificent sepulcher in the world. You are gazing now at the burial place of Wellington's chief antagonist. Above, the dome; beneath your feet, the variegated pavement; down in the open crypt, rimmed round with the marble balustrade, the sar-

cophagus. Circled with wreaths of laurel, are written in mosaic the principal victories of the great hero. Ranged round are the tattered flags he bore, waving to triumph. Read that inscription—it is a sentence from the great Emperor's will written in his exile: "I desire that my ashes lie on the banks of the Seine, among the French people whom I have loved so well." But Napoleon himself has gone. His influence remains, but he is not in the world. Him, neither, can France have in any way a personal presence.

Go to Rome; stand for a moment under the encircling dome of the Pantheon. Raphael loved that majestic building, more majestic even than St. Peter's. It was his wish that he might be buried there. Look! There on the wall it is written, "Here is the tomb of Raphael." But Raphael is not there. You may gaze entranced upon his Transfiguration in the Vatican, you may be touched and softened as his wonderful Madonnas tell you the history of that virgin motherhood, with its pains, its mysteries, its beatitudes. But Raphael was

done with this world at thirty-seven. He puts color no more to canvas. Everywhere in Rome you may see something that he has done; nowhere can you see anything that he is doing. His works last; he has gone forever.

The great heroes, painters, poets, teachers —they have been; but, as to this world, they are no longer. They have gone elsewhere. They have carried their presence with them. They are memories; they are not presences.

Is the Lord Christ like these? Canon Liddon asks. Is he no more than the first of the shadows of the past, the first of memories, the first of biographies, the most perfect of human ideals? Is he only an ideal, after all? Does he reign only in virtue of a mighty tradition of human thought and feeling in his favor, which creates and supports his imaginary throne?

No, he is a present, personal, living Saviour. "Lo! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world," is not an idle—not an unfulfilled promise. He is not with us

merely as a thought, but as a life. He gathers us up into His own being, He floods us with it. There is inspiration here certainly for any duty, for any endurance. The faith, Christ with me, can make the poorest and the hardest life luminous, joyous, glorious. This is the faith that overcometh the world.

## *DEAD, BUT YET ALIVE.*

PAUL says to the Colossians, "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

John Howard is just entering St. Petersburg. Years before he quietly began that course of philanthropy which has put a crown upon his name, and changed the prison-methods of the world. Just now his fame is getting widely blown about. He has finished a difficult tour of prison-inspection in Sweden. He is approaching the capital of Russia. But his fame hinders him. It eats up his time. It blocks his path. Like a carrier-pigeon to its nest, he would fly straight and swiftly to his work. So he leaves his carriage in the neighborhood and enters the city privately. The Empress has marked him, though, and sends a message to invite him to the palace.

Here, men of the usual sort would say, was an opportunity. Here was, certainly, a perfectly pardonable chance for public praise. Mounting the pedestal of the palace—who would not see him? Public praise and public fame are not unpleasant. Most men hunger for them. But John Howard is evidently a fanatic. His heart is set upon but one thing. He believes himself to have heard God's voice calling him to the duty he is doing. He cannot rid himself from the dominion of that duty. Howard looks at the invitation with "his cool, piercing, English eye." To be sure, the Empress may be won to a special interest in prisons. The fires of philanthropy may be kindled in the court itself. But, as things are now, the chances are against it. Tarrying in the palace will hinder more than help. He cannot wait to accept the invitation of the Empress; he passes the palace to plunge into the prisons.

"But ye are dead." John Howard, living in his duty, is dead to every other sort of life—to intercourse with men, to applause,

to the glitter of high society. He would rather be in prison, with duty, than in the palace, away from it. A very uncomfortable sort of life, you say. But you cannot help acknowledging it to be the truest and noblest sort in the light of conscience, in the light of God.

This is the meaning of the Apostle to those Colossians. Thus are they dead, and yet alive. There is a lower fleshly life, rooted in pleasures, pomps, vanities—in uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness which is idolatry; in the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But ye are dead to such a life now, O, Colossian Christians! You dwell in another realm—your life is hid with Christ in God.

Think a moment of a life like this.

It is a life in God. Here is a tree. It is rooted in the soil, and pumps up the juices by a million rootlets. It is bathed in the atmosphere, and the innumerable mouths of its innumerable leaves breathe it. It is immersed in the sunlight, and it gathers

robustness out of that. It is wet with the rains and with the dews, and gains freshness and vitality out of them. The life of the tree is in the soil, and air, and rain, and light, and dew. So this life in God is a life which subsists in Him. It gathers its vitality from Him. It is fed by forces which flow from Him. It is swayed by motives which stream from Him. Its source and sustenance is in God.

It is a life with Christ in God. That it is in God, is possible because it is with Christ. Christ is the bond uniting God and man. Christ is at once Deity and Humanity—God and Brother. Christ comes to a man and carries up His life with him into God. That word translated “with,” denotes the closest contact and companionship.

It is a life hidden with Christ in God. That word “hidden,” is but another touch of the Apostle’s pencil to express the profound marriage and intimacy of the regenerate life with God. All real spiritual unions are hidden ones. A genuine friendship is the hiding of one heart in another.

There are external friendships, where one heart touches another as stone touches stone, in merely outward contact, because society, or interest, or convenience, may demand it. Remove the external pressure, and the hearts roll apart as stones do. But when two drops of water touch each other, each hides itself in each. All this is but the faintest possible illustration of the meaning of this word "hid." A life hid with Christ, is a life so joined to Him as to be lost in Him. It is laid away in Him. It is protected, guarded, nourished in Him. It is itself a sharer in His being and bliss.

This is the innermost meaning of becoming a Christian--we are dead, and yet alive. We are dead to the old and lower--we are alive to the new and higher.

Such is a secure life, certainly. No harm can touch the withdrawn sanctuary in which its real existence finds its home.

Such is a joyful life, certainly. To be thus alive with God and Christ, is to have chosen down to the deepest roots of being, the Supreme Right. There is no such sun-

shine as the Right streams forth. It gilds povertyes. It blesses sick-rooms. It illuminates self-sacrifice.

Such is a life which shall find a glorious revealing, certainly. There is more in it than we know. If a man had never seen a harvest, he could form no conception of its width and wealth from the seed. So it is with this life with Christ in God. It is a life hidden—a latent life—it is in its seed-form here. But the seed holds the harvest. Now are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be.

## *THE SECRET OF A TRUE LIFE.*

WE have, on the scientific or physical side of it, a very vague name for a very wonderful thing. That name is Force. By force, we mean that universal energy which, everywhere around us, is pushing up and out into such a various expression. We are apt to speak of dead matter. We hardly speak rightly thus. Matter is moving, acting, incessantly. Matter is seized upon and arranged and molded by force ; by that great structural energy which is ever thrilling through the world and compelling matter into the differing shapes of rock, crystal, tree, flower, fruit.

Were you to visit the Egyptian pyramids you would see vast and regular piles of mighty stones—stones so mighty, that the wonder for all time since has been, by what

almost omnipotent leverage such blocks were lifted and so exactly laid.

But nature is a pyramid-builder. Here is a solution of common salt. Were you to examine it by a microscope, you could discover nowhere floating through the water any of the salt particles. No microscope is piercing enough to define them. But let that solution stand a little while in the open air. The water which has been holding the salt disappears by evaporation. The salt remains. The inconceivably minute particles begin to arrange themselves. In strange and regular order they lay themselves down. In what order? Almost precisely according to the architecture of the old Egyptian pyramids. As Mr. Huxley says, "We have little pyramids built by salt, terrace above terrace, from base to apex; forming thus a series of steps resembling those up which the Egyptian traveler is dragged by his guides."

Now, neither the great stone piles nor the exquisite and microscopic piles of salt were built by chance. Any sane mind re-

jects at once such an explanation. In neither case did it happen so. The Eastern pyramids were reared by the toiling hands of multitudinous Egyptian slaves. The salt-atoms came together according to the law of crystallization. And, pushing backward amid the dim realm of causes, we do not think it unscientific to say that it is God who has given over these salt-atoms into the dominion of the force of crystallization.

There must be somehow the inward force to shape the beautiful external thing.

Now this principle is true for life. The desires, the purposes, the emotions, the actions which go to make up life do not tumble into any crystalline clearness or beautiful exactitude.

Dr. Arnold of Rugby gives in one of his letters an account of a saintly sister. For twenty years, through some disease, she was confined to a kind of crib ; never once could she change her posture for all that time. "And yet," says Dr. Arnold, and I think his words are very beautiful, "I never

saw a more perfect instance of the spirit of power and love and of a sound mind. Intense love, almost to the annihilation of selfishness ; a daily martyrdom for twenty years, during which she adhered to her early-formed resolution of never talking about herself ; thoughtful about the very pins and ribbons of my wife's dress, about the making of a doll's cap for a child ; but of herself—save as regarded her improving in all goodness—wholly thoughtless ; enjoying everything lovely, graceful, beautiful, high-minded, whether in God's works or man's, with the keenest relish ; inheriting the earth to the very fullness of the promise ; and preserved through the very valley of the shadow of death from all fear or impatience, or from every cloud of impaired reason which might mar the beauty of Christ's Spirit's glorious work. May God grant that I might come but within one hundred degrees of her place in glory."

Certainly such a life was true and beautiful. But the radiance of such a life never cheered this world by chance. A sunny

patience, a bright-hearted self-forgetfulness, a sweet and winning interest in the little things of family intercourse, the divine lustre of a Christian peace, are not fortuitous weeds carelessly flowering out of the life garden.

It is the internal which makes the external. It is the force residing in the atoms which shapes the pyramid. It is the beautiful soul within which forms the crystal of the beautiful life without. There are exquisite shells within the sea—the shell of the nautilus, many-chambered, softly curved, pearl-adorned, glowing with imprisoned rainbows. There are ugly shells within the sea—rude, dirt-colored, unsightly clam-shells. But the shells are as the fishes within. To them is given the power of extracting out of the same sea the beauty and the grace, or the dullness and the rudeness.

So life will ever be what we make it—nautilus-shell or clam-shell. If we would have our life true and beautiful, then we

must *be* true and beautiful. There is no other secret.

How can we be thus? There is a Scripture which answers the question: Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me.

If we want our hearts the residence of Christ, we must become Christly. But we must make them His residence. We cannot happen into Christlikeness.

## *THE MOTIVE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.*

**M**OTIVE—that this is the transcend-  
ent matter.

Motive—that which impels to action  
and so stamps with its own color the black  
or white of the eventuating deed.

“Give me a great thought that I may  
live upon it,” cried the German poet, some-  
thing large enough, stirring enough, noble  
enough to push on and preside over my  
life.

I waited one sweet summer afternoon in  
the secret cabinet of the First Napoleon,  
in the country palace of Fontainebleau.  
There were the cases filled with books with  
which to feed that mighty mind. Here  
was the great, wide table on which were  
spread the maps over which he made those  
marvelous military calculations and com-  
binations, seizing minutes when his laggard  
foes thought hours nothing.

Now look around that window in the niche of which he used to sit and ply and weave his world-including thoughts, and see the motive which urged him on. Read those great gold letters set around its casement: Lodi, Arcola, the Pyramids, Marengo, Austerlitz—plainly the too-frequent French motive, glory—that he might add other shining names of prowess to the already long and shining list.

The apostate Julian objected to Augustine, “It is sin, then, when a heathen clothes the naked and binds up the wounds of the infirm.”

And Augustine answers that the act in itself, the matter of the act, is not sin, but as it does not proceed from faith and the purpose to honor God, the *form of the act*, the seminal principal of it which contains the morality of it, is sin. And you cannot help feeling that Augustine, after all, was right. A bad motive, dressed up in garments of goodness, does not, because of its dress, get itself changed into goodness.

If I am honest, simply because honesty

is the best policy, I am not therefore rightly honest as to motive, though I may be as to act. Upon that principle, if I should ever find that dishonesty is the best policy, for the reason that I was honest in the first case I would be dishonest in the second. An honest deed cannot regenerate a dishonest motive. And in the last analysis and always, motive dominates action.

"As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." It is the man in the deepest springs of his being and not at his finger-tips who is the real man.

In the divine government a man is discriminated by motives. That which sets a man in motion, which appeals to his sensibilities, stimulates his desires, compels his will, and so at last presses out into the flower and fruit of action—it is that by which a man is finally adjudicated. The question of motive is the great question.

For the Christian the undermost and overmastering motive is Christ. A Christian is a man *Christed*. Novalis extols Spinoza as a God-intoxicated man. Spi-

noza's God was the God of the pantheist—an Impersonal Substance constituting the universe, an Absolute Infinite, a Universe-Ego, a Plenary Void, a Subject-Object identified—whatever these may mean. But the Christian is to be, to put the strong German of Novalis into our less pliable English speech, a Christ-intoxicated man. He is one whose whole being is to be pervaded and presided over by the person Christ. The first thought, and the last thought, and the thought intermediate is to be Christ. The innermost motive of his life is Christ.

It is no other place than this which the Lord claims. He that loveth father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me is not worthy of Me.

It is no other place than this which Paul yields the Lord Jesus when he exclaims, "For me to live is Christ."

## *A SOUL ON THE WAY TOWARD LIGHT.*

I HAVE often thought the Ethiopian eunuch an admirable illustration of such a soul. Look at him for a moment. He had been a heathen; he had become a worshiper of Jehovah. He had been to Jerusalem to do service at the temple; on his way home he is reading the Scripture; he is poring over the prophecy of Isaiah; he is thinking within himself, Of whom speaketh the prophet? is it of himself or of some other?

While he is riding on, Philip accosts him, Understandest thou what thou readest? He asks Philip to a seat beside him. He listens to his explanations.

Then, under the touch of Philip's interpretation, the dim Scripture begins to glow before him, and the distinct vision of the Crucified begins to gather shape. That

feeds and fills the hunger of his soul—the beholding of the Lamb of God. He sees, he recognizes, he takes hold by faith. He is in the clear light now who had been in the mists. Even the day-spring from on high has risen on his soul. Then there follows the profession of his faith in baptism.

I rode one morning several miles before the day had broken. Not yet had the sway of the night been in anywise disturbed. It was dark; it was cold; the way was dim. Ridges of fog had settled down, obscuring the road, wrapping the houses round, flinging their pall upon the trees. The world was waiting for a new day. Then there was painted upon the eastern sky the first dawn-streaks of the morning. Soon the sun himself appeared. The darkness folded its curtains. The fog banks were pierced and scattered by the slanting javelins of the sunbeams. The world could see. The sun was king.

Thus it was, spiritually, with this servant of Candace. Now at last day shone upon

his soul. All was brimming with fresh light. He went on his way rejoicing.

Notice why all this spiritual brightness came to him. It was not because he had gone to Jerusalem to worship ; he might have done that because it was respectable. Heathen religions at that time were flickering out. It was a very common and reputable thing to become a Jewish proselyte. It was not because he was studying the Scriptures; he might have done that as a mere literary exercise, because Isaiah was a wonderful poet ; or to carp and criticise. It was not because he so cordially welcomed Philip ; he might have done this from courtesy. It was not because he listened attentively to Philip's preaching ; he might have done this to be polite. It was not because of any one of these reasons, or because of them all together, that he found the glorious light.

Pascal says, "The perception of truth is a moral act." Then again, Pascal says, "The heart has reasons of which the understanding knows nothing." The German

Fichte says, "Our system of thought is often but the history of our heart." "If then," he says again, "the will be steadfastly and sincerely fixed upon what is good, the understanding will, of itself, discover what is true." And then again, another writer says, "Belief in God is not a science, but a virtue." And with all this agrees the Scripture, With the heart man believeth unto righteousness. And all this is to say, that the undermost and necessary qualification toward getting on into religious light is moral disposition. This servant of Queen Candace shows, in all his action, that his deepest feeling was, God has the highest and most majestic claims upon me, and just as soon and as fast as those claims are made known to me I will submit to them. The man's heart was toward the sunrise, therefore he found the sunrise. The man's soul was a sincere soul, sincerely seeking moral light. Thus everything was a help to him; worship in the temple was a help to him ; the study of the Scriptures was a help to him ; the preaching of Philip was

a help to him; baptism was a help to him. Beneath all these things there was a soul earnestly longing for the light, and so through all these things the light streamed in.

That soul is on the certain path toward light which, sincerely desiring the light, constantly submits to the claims of the light as they are made known. That soul cannot stay in darkness any more than a flower, opening its petals broadly to the sun, can stay in shadow.

## *THE JOYFULNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.*

**I**T is comparatively easy to be ascetic. It is at once nobler and harder to be Christian.

He was a Nazarite. No razor was to touch his hair. No wine was to pass his lips. He withdrew himself from common life. He dwelt in the wilderness. He denied himself. He was separate, simple, austere. He wore but a rough girdle of camel's hair. He ate but locusts and wild honey. He would put beneath his feet every usual, human joy, that, standing on it, he might be lifted into a closer contact with the Divine. He married no wife. He entered into no festivity. And his preaching was like his life—stern, denunciatory—woe, vengeance—the fan in the hand of judgment, and the earth beaten and purged

like a threshing floor. That sad and sombre man standing there amid the gloomy shadows of the rocks—he had been the best type, in his time, of one thoroughly religious. Afterward Jesus said of him, This is Elias which was to come; among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.

Yet it is most remarkable and noteworthy that when the baptism had been received, and the temptation endured, and the ministry entered on, almost the first official act of it is to lead the disciples—not into a wilderness after the manner of John the Baptist, but to a marriage feast.

This was the most joyful feast a Jew could know. Everything bright in Oriental customs gathered and culminated there. The bridegroom wore a festive dress. On his head was a nuptial crown. He was redolent of myrrh, frankincense—all rare perfumes. The bride was wrapped in white garments, most costly, flashing with gold thread and spangled with jewels. Then there was the flaming torchlight procession

through the streets. Then, when at last bride and bridegroom met, for seven, and sometimes for fourteen days, were the festivities protracted. There were games; there was laughter; mirth was king.

It was a feast like this to which the Saviour came. He and His disciples were of the joyful company. He leaves John the Baptist in the wilderness and gives the sanctity of His presence to such a scene. It means something for us. Every act of Christ has meaning for us. A religion which cannot take in the significance of this glory is one-sided, and so far false. Think, too, how long the world had been waiting for this ministry—through what thousand years of darkness, crime, and dim heathen gropings. Remember, too, that thirty years had passed since the Advent had been announced. Think also of the hungry need for His healing, preaching, redeeming, just then in Palestine; what crowds of sick, what throngs of the heavily-laden, what multitudes vainly turning, like one in fever, now here, now there, for peace

of mind. It would seem as though now, any way, when the ministry was at last begun, joyful weddings could get on without the Master, and the healing power flow forth in constant stream, and the words of balm be incessantly pressed upon the sin-wounds of the heart; that for Him at least there could be no time for such worldliness. But the Lord Jesus did tarry at this wedding feast. There the fact stands; the entrance into the Lord's ministry was by the way of such social joys. The first miracle was wrought that these joys might go on unhindered.

Well, I can get no other lesson from it all than this: that Christianity is not asceticism. Joyfulness, too, is righteousness. Recreation, in its time and place, is just as religious as prayer and preaching in its time and place. To be Christian is not to be like John the Baptist in the wilderness. You say Christianity is hard, and narrow, and repressive, and blighting toward the fragrant flowers of our delights. I behold my Master at this wedding feast, and say,

Not so. Everything rightly joyful in this wide world belongs to the Christian. The glory manifested here is the glory of the sanctity of all legitimate human joys.

It is a great deal easier to be like John the Baptist than like Christ. But to be like Christ is the end and aim of Christian living. We are not to separate ourselves from life; we are to consecrate life for Jesus' sake. I think these true and noble words, "To shroud ourselves in no false mist of holiness; to dare to show ourselves as we are, making no solemn affectation of reserve or difference from others; to be found at the marriage feast; to accept the invitation of the rich Pharisee, Simon, and the scorned publican, Zacheus; to mix with the crowd of men, and yet amidst it all to remain a consecrated spirit—a being set apart—not of this world, alone in the heart's deeps with God; to put the cup of this world's gladness to the lips and yet be un-intoxicated; to gaze steadily on all its grandeur and yet be undazzled; plain and simple in personal desires; to feel the

world's brightness and yet deny its thrall  
—this is the difficult and rare and glorious  
life of God in the soul of man."

May God give us this grace of the world's  
use, and save us from the disaster of the  
world's abuse.

## *TRIBULATION.*

THERE is a latent poetry in this word, which, besides being very beautiful, will assist us to discover the design and use of tribulation.

It is an Oriental harvest time. There is the threshing floor. It is hard and smooth and broad—formed of the living rock or of earth closely trodden together. Here come the reapers bending beneath their loads of gathered grain. They cast the grain down upon that threshing floor. And here comes the tribulum—that is the threshing instrument. It is a heavy wooden platform. On the under side it is studded thick with bits of broken flint or with savage iron teeth. Oxen are yoked to it. See! they drag it back and forth over the prostrate grain. Now look—all the wheat sheaves are sadly bruised and split. The wheat itself is

broken out from the enfolding and useless straw. Everywhere on the threshing floor you can see multitudes of the clean kernels. Now they push aside the straw. Now with fans they blow the chaff away. There lie the wheat kernels—the real thing they have been after through all the sowing and the reaping and the threshing, fit now to be ground and manufactured into bread for human use. But they could not have gotten the wheat had it not been for the tribulum.

Tribulation takes its name and meaning from that instrument—the tribulum. Tribulation is the Divine threshing of a man. And Christ tells us that in this world we must have it. The world is a threshing-floor, and on every threshing-floor there is tribulation. Blows of pain must break off the evil husks hindering what is good and noble in us. The useless straw must be beaten away from the golden kernel.

Now no chastisement, for the present, seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, says the Scripture. Threshing is never pleasant.

Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby—The true and valuable grain appears.

## *THE TRUE TREATMENT OF CHASTISEMENT.*

THE twelfth chapter of Hebrews is very specific in direction here.

We are not to despise chastisement. My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord. That is to say, we are not to cherish any hardened defiance of suffering springing from a stiff self-will or a proud reluctance to confess that we need chastisement. We are not to have, under chastisement, any contumacious spirit. We are not to kick against God's will. We are not in a hard way to stand out against it. Christianity is never stoicism; it is loving submission. One said to me once, in effect, "It was wrong and cruel for God to take away my son. I will not be reconciled to it. It was very ugly, unnecessary harshness." That was meeting chastisement with a stony

heart; refusing to learn its lessons; despising it. We may not carry ourselves thus under our chastisement. Matthew Henry says, "We must take heed of being made cross by cross providences."

We are not to faint under divine chastisement—Nor faint when thou art rebuked of me. Some people, when trouble comes, just despond and give up. They become like tangles of helpless sea-weed dashed by the waves against the shore. There was an old Israelitish king, Jehoram by name, who, surrounded by all sorts of difficulty, cried out, "Behold this evil is of the Lord ; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?" That was fainting under chastisement—thinking that God did not care, that prayer was useless. There was a great prophet once who had been immensely brave and had done for the Lord most valiant service ; but obstacles hindered him, and all of a sudden he ran away and tired himself utterly out by a long flight into the wilderness, and sank down under a juniper tree and wailed weakly forth, It is enough;

now, O Lord, take away my life. That was fainting under divine chastisement. How good God is, not to answer our fainting, despairing prayers! Elijah did not die. God swept him upward at the last in a chariot of fire, he not tasting death.

We are to be sure that every chastisement is right and wise. God makes no mistake in the measure or the kind of pain he sends us. For our earthly parents "Verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure;" that is, as seemed good to them; "but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness."

Some one lays down these five admirable rules for reproofing children: "First, reprove without anger; passion destroys the moral power of rebuke. Second, reprove with consideration; take the best view of the case, not the worst. Third, let your reproof be directed to the reason and the conscience; thereby you educate the child. Fourth, reprove gently; Thy gentleness hath made me great. Fifth, do not always reprove; molasses catches more flies than

vinegar. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, least they be discouraged." Admirable rules certainly—but then, who keeps them? In this difficult work of rearing children, what bunglers we are! We chasten them as it seems good to us, and how constantly do we fall into sad mistakes! But God, in his chastisement of us, we are to be sure makes no mistake. "Should we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" Infinite wisdom, infinite love, infinite tenderness, appoint the pain. It is best, wisest, most right.

We are to be sure that some grand design of beatitude is coming out of our chastisement. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby.

Wherefore, lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees.

## *DIVINE AND HUMAN ENERGY.*

DR. LYMAN BEECHER tells us that when he was pastor at East Hampton, Long Island, old Deacon Miller, a holy man, sent for him one day. The deacon was housed with sickness. "I am glad to see you," said he ; "I know how you feel ; you must not be discouraged ; I lie on my bed and pray for you. I have been praying for all the village. I begin at one end, and go into the next house, and then into the next, until I have gone round ; and then I have not prayed enough, so I begin and go round again." What wonder that Dr. Beecher adds, "I went home expecting."

There is a spiritual power which is sublime in its holy daring ; which mounts upward, and lays hold of the Throne of God ; which, with a reverent resolution, allies itself with the Divine arm. Along the channel of such spiritual power the Divine energy flows and the truth overcomes.

Now it is a principle we are never to lose sight of, that in this world the Divine energy coöperates with the human energy. God had stored force in steam from the beginning. Steam could drive an engine just as well five hundred years ago as now. But before the force of steam could be harnessed into use for man, James Watt must notice it lifting the cover of his mother's teakettle, and generalizing from that beginning, must build his engine which steam could move. God had stored heat in the anthracite coal seaming our mountains from the beginning; but God kindled no fire with it that man might see it burn. Man called it black stone and thought it incombustible as granite, until at last, by what we call accident, he learned how to apply to it the proper draught, and its heat was disengaged. God had given electricity the power of swift flight from the beginning; but God arranged no batteries; God strung no telegraph wires; man must do that; doing that, the speed which God had given electricity enabled man to talk to man, though each stood at antipodes.

Thus God waits upon man ; working through him, as it were ; holding back his power until men actualize and apply it. And what is true everywhere else, is true also in religion. When shall God's kingdom come ? When we, allying ourselves with God by self-surrendering prayer, ask that it may come. Jesus saw the multitudes ; He was moved with compassion for them. They fainted ; they lay down wearied, like sheep overdriven ; they were scattered abroad like sheep unshepherded. Jesus saw it all, was moved by it all, was stirred with pity because of all. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. What then ? Will he at once commission and dispatch the laborers by his own immediate and unconditioned power ? Not so. He turns to his disciples ; He calls upon them to summon their spiritual energy for the crisis ; He adjures them to lay hold upon God for His help because of that unreaped harvest, that so, through the use of the power in their hands, the help

might come. "Pray ye, therefore," says Jesus, "the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest." As though He had said, "Except you use your spiritual power—except you mount upward towards God in the energy of prayer, the harvest must stay unreaped." God uses man. God coöperates with man.

Just here a difficulty arises: "I don't feel as I ought; I am not interested as I should be," you say. "I lack the spiritual virility; I am not conscious as I should be, of special energy in the use of prayer. Since God thus waits somehow upon me, how can I cast away this chill and death and weakness?"

You remember that fearful night in Egypt. You remember the blood upon the doorposts. All who were behind those reddened doorposts were safe utterly.

But that was not all. There was a journey before the Israelites. They needed the strength for it. That lamb whence the blood flowed they were to take and roast with fire; then, gathering together, every

one of them was to eat of it. Do you not see the symbolism? The figure is strong, but real. They were saved by the blood of the lamb. They were furnished with power by eating the lamb. You have trusted in the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, and so are saved; but your Passover has been too much a partial one. You are the weak, doubting, powerless Christian that you are, because you have not—let me use the strong figure of the Scripture—eaten of the Lamb of God. You have trusted in Christ's blood for the pardon of past sins, and that is well; but you have not received spiritual refreshment and entered into spiritual mastery, because you have not kept yourself in constant communion with Christ—using again the strong figure which Christ himself has sanctioned—eating His flesh and drinking His blood. And that is ill. We gain vigor for the Christian battle by a constant spiritual appropriation of the Divine energy garnered up in Christ.

## *THE SHUT DOOR.*

THE symbol of a strong life is the Shut Door. When thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, says the Master.

There are a good many things which that closed door ought to shut out. There are some things it ought to shut in.

That closed door ought to shut out the Outward.

We are each of us single souls moving on toward God. The life we live in God is a separate, personal life. It must grow from its own root and not another's. We must have our daily soul-work between our own souls and God. We must read our own Bibles. We must do our own praying. We must enter into our own believing. We must grow ourselves, each one of us, singly, into the grace and knowledge of God.

Each separate Christian life must strike its root back into a separate and singular communion with God. By the closed closet door shut out then, for a little time, the Outward.

The Outward of daily toil. You have no right to be so busy that you cannot pray.

The Outward of even Christian work. You may not let what you do for Christ take the place of secret and innermost communion with him.

The Outward of Public Worship. You may not quiet your conscience about your neglect of secret prayer by a multitudinous running to public prayer.

The Outward of Family Worship. There are some who make the reading of a chapter and a general prayer with the family a foil by which they ward off from themselves the duty of intimate and self-scrutinizing intercourse with God.

Robert Cecil used to say, "I feel that all I know, and all I teach will do nothing for my soul, if I spend my time as some people do, in business or company. My soul starves

to death in the best company; and God is often lost in prayers and ordinances. Enter into thy closet, said Christ, and shut thy door. Shut thy door means much. It means shut out not only nonsense but business; not only the company abroad, but the company at home. It means let thy poor soul have a little rest and refreshment, and God have opportunity to speak to thee in a still small voice—or He will speak to thee in thunder.”

Shut out the Outward. Be alone with God.

That closed door is to shut out conscious sinning.

What is real prayer? It is the deliberate choice of God and of the things of God. But now if a man come into God’s presence cherishing known sin, holding to it, refusing to yield it, he chooses sin instead of God. His prayer, then, is invalidated. He may have used the form of prayer, but he has not prayed. His heart prefers other than that the lips declare. If he would really pray, he must shut conscious, wilful sinning outside the closet door.

A Spanish artist was employed to paint the Last Supper. It was his aim to throw all the sublimity of his art into the figure and face of Christ. But he painted on the table, just in the foreground, some silver cups, exquisitely chased. When his friends came to see the picture in the easel, everyone said, "What beautiful cups." But it was Christ the artist chiefly meant to paint, not silver cups. He seized his brush and dashed them from the canvas.

Would you know what sin you must leave outside your shut closet door? Anything, everything, however beautiful, however pleasurable, which comes between your soul and Christ; everything which clouds the vision of that Face. Whatever separates between your soul and Christ is sin, at least to you. The door of the closet must be shut on it.

That closed door ought to shut out Indolence. "Believe me," said Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "to pray with all your heart and strength; with the reason and the will; to believe vividly that God will listen to your

voice through Christ, and verily do the thing He pleaseth thereupon—that is the last, the greatest achievement of the Christian warfare on earth.” And Coleridge agrees with Scripture. What we read of as the “effe-  
ctual fervent prayer” ought to be rendered the energetic working prayer. We must pray as though prayer were real; only thus can it be real.

That closed door ought to shut out Hurry. It is the patient, silent quiet of the closet that we need. I think these great words of James Martineau, “There it is—in such patient silence—that we accumulate the inward power which we distribute and spend in action; that the soul acquires a greater and more vigorous being, and gathers up its collective forces to bear down upon the piecemeal difficulties of life and scatter them to dust; there alone can we enter into that spirit of self-abandonment by which we take up the cross of duty, how-  
ever heavy, with feet however worn and bleeding.” To such high and invigorating silence, Hurry is quick death. Often we

must leave Hurry outside that closed closet door.

But what is that closed closet door to shut in? God—God and our own souls. Robert Burns lamented that he could not “pour out his inmost soul, without reserve, to any human being, without danger of one day repenting his confidence.” But there is a secret oracle where the soul may utterly tell forth itself. “Shut thy door” on yourself and God. Tell him of your besetting sins, temptations, troubles, infelicities, perplexities, the greatest, the least; let Him speak to you, breathe upon you, quiet you, strengthen you.

And though none but God and your own soul shall know what goes on inside that shut door, all shall know that something mighty and beneficent has gone on inside of it; you shall come forth so calm, so shining, and so strong.

The symbol of a strong life is the Shut Door.

## *APPROPRIATION OF GOD.*

THE story of the discovery of gold in California is very interesting. There had been a kind of glowworm glimmer of gold about the country for many years. Spanish explorers had scented gold; but, somehow, only a little of it had been discovered, and the few people scattered thinly over the great State were altogether ignorant of the surprising treasure mingled with the sands on which they trod. They were poor people, yet with wealth right at their hand. They were poor, not because there was not wealth around them, but just because they had not made it their own—appropriated it.

But one day in the year 1847 some men were at work at Sutter's Mill on the American Fork of the Sacramento River. They were repairing the race-way of the saw mill. A little child, poking among the stones lying in the channel of the race-way, the waters of which had been turned aside that

it might be mended, picked up a lump of gold and showed it to her father for a pretty stone. That bit of gold was the key to the immense mineral wealth of the great State. Then the people who had been poor, grew rich through appropriating the wealth which had been around them all the time. Everywhere they began to find the gold. More of it in this race-way; in the Sacramento River; in all of its tributaries; sprinkled upon the hill sides, in the gullies scooped out by the fierce winter rains; everywhere. Then the multitudes started thitherward from all the world. California sprang, almost at once, from a nearly unknown and unsettled country, into a mighty State.

Now what was true of these early settlers of California on the side of worldly wealth, is true of most of us on the side of spiritual wealth.

With millions just at their hands, they were poor, through lack of appropriation. Most of us are poor spiritually, yet with all the treasure in the bosom of the Infinite

lying within the grasp of the soul; and we are poor, for the same reason—*lack of appropriation.*

We are not what we might be. Even the stateliest Christian is not, but the greater number of us are very far from being stately Christians. We are stricken spiritually. There is no large, constant and joyful income of religion. Few of us have enough to pay squarely and at once the daily debts of the daily duties, annoyances, trials, harassments of daily life. We are weak, and overcome of temptation, and impatient, and fretful, and complaining, and unloving, and harsh in judgment, and mean, and uncharitable, and only now and then a very little Christian. And yet right at the hand of the soul, there is a spiritual wealth as large and rich as the heart of God. We ought not to be content with such spiritual poverty. When Paul said he had learned in whatsoever state he was therewith to be content, he did not mean contentment with any such spiritual pauperism as curses the most people. We ought to be stirred with

discontent toward spiritual attainment, as thorough and abiding as seized those California settlers toward their past poverty when they came to know they might have the gold lying on all the hills simply for the picking up.

If one will look at the life of Paul he must see that the great apostle had a soul constantly wealthy with spiritual treasure. It made no difference how large the draft which might be made upon it by any exigency, by any sudden trouble, by any difficult duty, Paul had a sufficiency of this rare spiritual reserve with which at once to meet it. We always find him equal to the occasion—beyond the occasion. He was a man standing in life like some tall mountain, firm with granite root and white with robe of stainless snow. Let the tempests dash themselves—they can not blow away the mountain. Let the clouds gather—they cannot reach the altitude of its calm brow.

They put Paul in the inner dungeon, but the black and slimy walls rang with his midnight praises. They kept him two

years a prisoner at Cæsarea, and though an exhaustless energy was longing for action, he was content to serve by standing still and waiting.

The vision stood beside him at night and cried, Come over into Macedonia and help us; he was alert for the difficult duty.

His enemies said he served his Lord for money—pitiable criticism, it was poor pay which the apostle had—but he would disarm criticism by an unrewarded service, and so he worked cheerfully at the trade of tent-making. He was “troubled but not distressed; perplexed but not in despair; persecuted but not forsaken; cast down but not destroyed.”

Things had a squally look at Corinth. There were bitter partisans. Some said, “I am of Paul, some, I am of Apollos, some, I am of Cephas, and some, I am of Christ.” There was lapse and sin there. The old heathenish impurity had smutched the whiteness of the saints. But Paul had a persistent habit of looking at the brighter side. Things might be even worse at Cor-

inth. He would fasten sight on the stars piercing the night and not on the black patches of the night between the shining stars. And so even over Corinth he has a thankful song breaking out at once in his epistle to them : I thank my God always on your behalf. And when at last the hero's work was done and death stood just next him, flashing from Nero's sword, Paul was ready, and he was king over the "king of horrors," bursting forth into the Victor's triumph—I have kept the faith, I have finished my course.

How rich and furnished was that life of Paul ; how sublimely wealthy with spiritual treasure ; how much religion did for Paul ; how mean and ragged are our souls compared with his. And yet the wealth which was for him is just as much for us.

Here is the secret of Paul's supply of spiritual wealth. He did not allow the help of God to lie neglected round him ; he reached forth and took it ; he made it his own by a personal appropriation. "I thank my God" he writes to the Corinthians.

That word *my* contains the whole secret. God was his God,—God with his white holiness ; God with his tender pity ; God with his loving providence ; God with his strong justice ; God with his infinite resources and infinite power was his.

Why should he not be supplied, and strong and overcoming. How, indeed, could he help being ? You might as well expect Vanderbilt to want his daily bread. I thank *my* God.

And the reason why we are the poverty stricken souls we are, is just because we do not reach out and take hold of God and make Him ours after Paul's fashion.

God is rich enough for us, and God is near enough to us. But we are like the early California settlers—digging ditches, repairing broken raceways, when all around us, paving every rivercourse and gleaming on every hillside, and glorifying even every common gully, is gold to be had simply for the taking. Personal appropriation of God ; this is the secret of an exalted life. Let us learn to say with Paul—*My* God.

## *BORROWING TROUBLE.*

**B**EHOLD the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns, but your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

That is to say, the fact of God's providence is constantly displayed in this lesser realm of things.

Behold the birds, the sparrows. They have no lands to plow and sow; they have no barns into which to gather the harvest, yet God's providence includes them: They are fed.

Look at that flower. It is the lily of the field; it grows wild; nobody planted it; it has a lustrous bloom; it is brilliant with red, orange, yellow. There was no garment in all the wardrobe of the great Solomon which could compare with such investiture of color. But while so fair, it is very frail. Its blossoming is short-lived at best. Let but the hot south wind blow for a few hours across the plain, and it lies there parched, with all its beauty faded, and amid the dry grass, used for fuel for the baker's oven, the withered lily finds its end. And yet, though springing from the seeds the breezes have drifted any whither; though possessed of such a tenuous life; though smitten down so constantly by the breath of the south wind; though good for nothing but to lend its little heat to the baker's need,—God does not forget to cloth it, and so gloriously.

Now rise from this lower realm into the higher. Are ye not much better than these?

Are you not much better than these in power? Birds and flowers cannot sow or reap or spin. Birds and flowers cannot in-

fluence the future. But you are better than the birds, than the flowers. You can toil, you can influence the future, you have faculty and foresight, you are lifted above these by the distance of a whole heaven. If God so cares for these which can labor not and yet are fed and clothed, think you His blessing will not fall on you, gifted with power to work, and filled with force to mould the future? You have ability for toil, and you have God. Are not these enough?

Are you not much better than these, too, in being? Consider: God lavishes beauty on the lily, having not so much utility as beauty. At best, it can bloom a little while and then give forth a flash of heat; and yet Solomon could not be so gloriously arrayed. Does not that tell us that there is no scantiness in God? His providence is not meagre in its bestowals. God has more for us in life than a bare existence. Since God is bounteous to this lily, will He not be bounteous to you?

Are you not much better than these, also, in destiny? "Which to-day is, and to-mor-

row is cast into the oven,"—how brief that life ! The span of a few hours is the utmost measure of it, and yet how is its little snatch of life all blest and brightened ! Flowers and birds are but the "poorest plebeians" of God's universe ; you are its grand and high "patricians." Your life, how great, how far-reaching, how endless, how weighted with a divine destiny ! If the little life of the flower is wealthy with such exuberance of care, will not you be cared for ? you, made but a little lower than the angels, whose bosoms are big with immortality !

Why, then, so borrow trouble ? God is no niggard. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. Do not, by a consuming anxiety, distrust that providence which is warbled to you in every song of bird, which paints its large and affluent thought concerning you on the petal of any most fragile and transient flower.

## *VARIABLE CHRISTIANS.*

WHEN the fight thickens, the captain says, "Steady, boys;" and it is their steadiness which pulls the soldiers through. Fitful soldiers are rarely useful ones. That is our great need to-day, steady Christians—men and women you can count on.

Many Christians are like intermittent springs. They flow to-day; to-morrow you cannot get a thimbleful of religious activity out of the dried channels of their lives.

In the constellation Perseus is a star which shines for two days with the brilliancy of a star of the second magnitude; then suddenly it loses its light, and in three hours drops to the radiance of a star of the fourth magnitude; then, in another three hours and a half, it flashes up into its former

brightness, but only to grow dim again. Some Christians are such variable stars.

What is the trouble? The heart is the nourishing power in a man. Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues or life. Be attentive to your love if you care for the life. Now abideth these three, faith, hope, love; but the greatest of these is love; because without love, faith and hope could not abide. It is the steady love which makes the steady life.

It is said that in the desert of Sinai, the slight streams are sometimes underground; and that often you trace their course, not by the gleam of waters, but by a trace of moss here, a fringe of rushes there, a solitary palm, a group of sweetly flowering acacias. But there, amid the sands, there must be the steady pulsing of the water underground, that the moss and the rushes may set their greenness upon the bosom of the desert, and the palm cast grateful shade, and the acacia dispense its smell. The life at the surface depends upon the life beneath. In religion, love to the personal Christ is

life-announcing water. When that fails, all the verdure dies.

The poet Southeby tells a very tender story of a lady, whose affianced usually traveled by the coach to visit her, and who, going one day to meet him, found instead of her betrothed an old friend dispatched to tell her of her lover's sudden death. She screamed out, "He is dead!" then her reason broke, and she lost all consciousness of her affliction. But from that fatal moment, for fifty years, in all seasons and in all weathers, she daily traversed the distance to the place where she expected her lover to alight from the passing coach; and every day she said in plaintive tone, "He is not come yet. I will return to-morrow;" and every to-morrow found her there. What kept the poor crazed creature steady against the accumulated disappointments of fifty years? What could keep her but a mighty love?

A steady love will make a steady Christian. "How can I get it," do you ask? "That I do not have it is just my trouble." Real love is always careful about little

things. Here is a very close question for you. Are you not allowing yourself in a good many little sins which a real love ought to consume out of your life? Yet you cling to them. You do not consecrate these things. Try a perfect consecration to the Lord of even doubtful things. You will be surprised how the Lord will take up His abode in you; how strongly and steadily He will cause your love to glow ; how easy, unhindered, quietly constant your life will be.

## *THE WORLD.*

**C**ONSTANT are the warnings of the Scripture against the world.

Be not conformed to this world. Love not the world, neither the things of the world.

It is the highest achievement of the Christian life to say with Paul, I am crucified unto the world. The constant enemy to the Christian life is the world.

But many a battle has been lost because the sun struck into the warrior's eyes, or the dust wrapped the enemy from sight. Exactly what is this world against which we are warned ? Let us get sight of it.

The world is beautiful. The sunshine floods it ; the harvests gladden it ; the mountains cast their purple shadows over it ; the birds sing through its summers. "Surely" you say, "I am not to stolidly

close my sense against a world like this." You say truly; you are not.

"Then too," you say, "I am in the world. I am a strand braided into its society. I am placed here, with the world's work in my hands, with the world's burden on my shoulders, with the world's opportunities opening before my feet, with the world's duties to be done, with the world's prizes to be won. Surely I am not to cut myself away from, and turn my back upon all these!" No, that is true, you are not.

When I was riding once through the great pine forest of the Sierra Nevada, the trail brought me to a vast tree, the trunk of which was hollowed out. The entrance to it was a little sheltered from the weather by boards nailed round it. The guide said that a man disgusted with the world had withdrawn himself into the lonely forest, and had been living there in that old tree. In the third or fourth century that might have been esteemed a specimen of Christian wisdom. But we have learned better the meaning of the Master's prayer

for His disciples—I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world but Thou dost keep them from the evil. To be a hermit is not to be a Christian. You are not to turn your back upon the world.

“But what world, then, am I warned against—what world must I fight?” you ask.

The world against which you are to struggle is not so much any particular thing or things as a pervading spirit. You are to contend with the world in the sense of worldliness.

Some time ago I went into a gentleman’s counting room and saw upon the wall, just above his desk, a Scripture motto. If I remember rightly, it was this—“Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

Now it is easy enough to see that there are two ways of doing business. In the spirit contrary to that Scripture, or in the spirit in accordance with that Scripture.

If that man should manage his concerns simply for his own glory, should be sharp in

bargains, and squeezing in contracts, and mean towards employees, and dishonest when he saw a chance for it ; or if he should be even scrupulously honest, because he had become convinced it was on the whole best for him, without any reference to God and the Right, then it is easy to see that man would be worldly, the slave of the world ; not fighting it, but capitulating to it. His chief thought is self.

But if that man carried out in all his transactions the spirit of that Scripture ; if he said, I am put here in this establishment of mine to serve God in it ; if he flashed the light of the Divine glory upon every bargain ; if he scorned dishonesty, and kept his hands clean from dirty tricks of trade because by thus doing he would stain his loyalty to God, then it is easy enough to see that though that man were the busiest upon the street, he would yet be a man unworldly ; not a captive of the world, but a son of God ; in the world as he ought to be, but victor over it as he ought to be. His chief thought is God.

It is against a worldly spirit which thinks everything of self and nothing of God that we are to struggle. This is the world we are to conquer. A man is to emblazon God's glory on his banner and keep that waving everywhere over duties, over pleasures, over habits, over bargains, over property, over votes, over friendships, over trials, over crosses, over eating, over drinking, over little things, over great things.

The world we are to fight is—self, the central thought for life. The victory we are to win is—God, the central thought for life.

## *BESETTING SINS.*

EVERY man has some peculiar and plaguing and persistent sinful tendency. Many men are grand and strong in many places. Every man is weak in some single place—signally, specially weak.

In the world of mythology, Achilles, dipped in the waters of a certain river, became invulnerable. The only trouble was that when his mother dipped him in she, in holding him by the heel, kept the heel dry, and thenceforward he was vulnerable there. It was the wound which smote his heel that killed him. There is an Achilles-heel in every one of us.

Charles the Second of England, easy-going, licentious, selfish, poorest of kings, meanest of men, had one political maxim, which he declared never failed him, “Every man has his price.” It is not true, in the

king's sense, that every man can be bribed ; but it is too sadly true that in every man there is some weak and unguarded spot where the assault of evil is peculiarly dangerous. Jacob had a strong tendency to deceit. Moses was apt to flame out in sudden anger and impatience. David could be easily overcome by lust. Elijah was liable to lose his courage. Peter was a born boaster. John was addicted to vengeful feelings. Judas was close, greedy, grasping, hard-hearted ; avarice was his sinful tendency, his besetting sin.

Now, what was true of men in the old times, is true of men in these. The human heart, in its weakness and passion, is much the same whether it beat in Bible times or in times like ours. Every one of us has a form of sinfulness which coincides most naturally with our inclination. It may be sensual appetite ; it may be slothfulness ; it may be stinginess ; it may be proud self-assertion and disdain of others ; it may be lack of courage—want of adherence to principle ; it may be a bragging, fire-brand-scattering,

scandal-mongering tongue. It may be this—it may be that. Something certainly it is.

Be sure, too, that this besetting sin is always a specious sin. By that I mean it is a sin concerning which one grows marvelously skillful in the marshalling of arguments for continuance in it.

For instance, there are many people so constituted that they cannot safely tamper with even a single glass of stimulant. There is a natural craving in them for it. It sets the nerves a-thrill; it fills with fine exhilaration ; it lifts off loads of care. There are some dull, sodden men who can soak in ardent spirits all their lives long with apparently little injury. But these of whom I speak cannot do so. They crave ; and when they gratify their craving, the evil thing burns up their manhood, their better purposes, their faculties, with quick and sad conflagration.

And yet such as these are the very persons whom you will find arguing that, because they so crave stimulant, they must have it.

Then, too, if a man is naturally slothful, how many reasons he will be able to find for taking his own ease and doing as little as he can. Then, too, if a man be badly ambitious, how, in behalf of this besetting sin, will he surely flatter himself that he is working for God, when he is really working for human applause. Then, too, if a man be given to sudden flaming forth of anger, how will he excuse himself for it and allow himself in it, because it is out and over—because he harbors nothing. Then, too, I have known men one of whose besetting sins was a sort of harsh, cross, uncourteous, un-Christian bluntness, who are always excusing this failing by saying, "Well, anyway, I always speak the truth ;" just as though, called upon to speak the truth, they are therefore called upon to speak it in jagged and un-Christian-like ways.

Ah, this besetting sin ! This sin that jumps with our inclinations, with the peculiar set and flow of our nature, is always a specious sin. The devil sometimes looks as

white and clean as an angel of light, but he is the devil still.

And so, of all sins this besetting sin is for every one of us the most dangerous. It is just the sin which at the last is likeliest to overmaster and lock us prisoners in its own destruction. For sin is evermore endowed with the quality of growth. He who will do evil of his own choice, is ultimately given over to evil as his master. Whosoever committeth sin is the slave of sin, says Christ. There is contained in sin an element of servitude. Allow yourself in conscious wrong; put fresh coal upon the fire of stimulant burning in you; flame forth in your scathing passion; cut your friends to pieces with your sharp tongue; feed your avarice by refusing charity—what have you now done? Gratified yourself? Yielded to your sinful inclination? Yes, you have done that, but you have not done that alone; you have inevitably done a vast deal more. You have given your besetting sin a closer grasp upon you. You have weakened toward it your capability of re-

sistance. You have bowed still more profoundly beneath its servitude. For, as another says—and you know as well as I that the words are true—they are the very A B C of morals, “In every act of transgressing the law of God, there is a reflex action of the human will upon itself, whereby it becomes less able to keep that law. To do wrong usurps the power to do right.”

Now, since sin thus holds in itself the power of growth and increasing tyranny through yielding to it, and since we are likeliest to yield to that sin which coincides most closely with our inclination, it is surely evident that the sin fraught with the direst danger to us, is just this peculiar, persistent, desirable besetting sin. If sin at last wreck us, it is on this rock that we shall go to pieces.

Wherefore, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset us.

## *RESISTANCE TO TEMPTATION.*

**T**HAT we must be tempted is certain. How we may resist is the most vital of questions. I wandered once for a long time amid the Catacombs at Rome. These subterranean passages are dense with a darkness which can be felt. They are intricate with tangled and sudden windings. Lose your way there and you may wander on and on, turning upon your path, till hunger hurries you and darkness bleaches you into death. It is a terrific place to be lost in. The chances are all against you. There is immense improbability that you ever find your way back again into the sweet Italian sunshine. But down there, among those Catacombs, I could not be lost, for just before me there went a man who had threaded them through and through, and in his hand

he carried a shining taper. Keeping close to him and keeping that light in view, I could not lose the way.

Our Lord Christ has passed along the dark and winding avenues of temptation and learned them every one. He knows just how dark they are—just how they turn and twist—to just what they lead. He goes before every one of us and holds up for guidance the flaming torch of his own example. Keeping that light in view, we cannot even here lose our way. Never let yourself be robbed of this certainty—that temptation was just as real to the Lord Jesus as it is to you and me. He is utterly our brother in this matter. Jesus was temptable. A great writer says: “We must here conceive the temptable as the tempted. In the person and life of Jesus there was no seeming. A drama where the face within the mask is falsehood ; where the voice is outside the soul ; where the person but personates an idea—is not here to be thought of. A real humanity cannot escape with a fictitious temptation.”

Solicited by temptation, there was danger that even Jesus might fall. Again that writer says: "We must conceive him as a subject of moral probation; he could not escape exposure to these trials. It behooved him in all things to be like unto his brethren. It might be, from the first and every moment, certain that he would achieve holiness, but could never be necessary. He could have been above the possibility of doing wrong only by being without the ability to do right."

The light which Jesus gives, then, to the question, how may I resist temptation, is clear, actual and genuine. It is light springing out of real conflict and real conquest. There were, in the life of our Lord Jesus, certain critical periods — certain periods when the forces of evil marshalled themselves more numerously and violently than at other times. What we, by way of eminence, call the temptation succeeding his baptism, was such a time.

After the feeding of the five thousand, when the people, wonder-stricken and burn-

ing with enthusiasm, gathered around him to compel him to become King was such a time. When Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, "Be thy death far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee," was such a time. Gethsemane was such a time.

Now, a careful study of such crises in the life of Jesus will disclose to us the fact that his triumph over temptation always included these three elements:

First—His resistance was instant. He never in the least harbored the thought of wrong. He said at once, Get thee behind me, Satan. He immediately sent the multitude away, that he might give himself to prayer.

Second—It was resolute. Evil plied its wiles in vain. They met such hardness as the waves do from the rocks.

Third—Our Lord's resistance to temptation was thus resolute and instant because such a resistance was but the constant expression of the presiding purpose of his life. A choice in one direction necessarily

excludes a choice in an opposite direction. We cannot serve God and Mammon. The doing of the Father's will was the presiding choice of Jesus. Whatsoever might antagonize this choice could not be in the least allowed.

The absolute choice of God, like our Lord's choice of the Father's will, and this choice resolutely and instantly expressed in the presence of anything and everything hostile to it, and also such constant recourse to prayer as is disclosed to us in the pattern life, will hold us firmly in the right and against the wrong.

The old school-men used to say that every act of sin included these three things—the solicitation, the delectation and the consent. The place for successful fighting is at the solicitation—there Jesus began his battlings. There must we begin ours, if we would be victorious.

## *SAINTS IN SARDIS.*

SARDIS was a chief city of Asia Minor. It was the frequent prize of the greater Greek and Roman military leaders. It was a large market of agricultural productions, for the soil about it was exceedingly fertile. Because of its convenient position on the seacoast, it was as well a commercial mart of great importance. It was also a manufacturing centre, celebrated for its cloths of peculiarly fine texture. Thus it was a place where much wealth gathered.

It was a city devoted, too, to the heathenism of the time. Wealth brought luxury. Luxury gathered to itself the rot of various degeneracy; and the presence of a religion feeble in moral power and pandering to man's worst passions, continually relaxed the moral tone. Some soil is good, some

is worse, some is very bad. Sardis seemed to be a place in which the seed of the kingdom found peculiar difficulty of growth; the moral soil was bad.

In Sardis a church had been established. It was, however, infected with the evil of the place. As a church it had lost much of its distinctively Christian character. It had a name to live, yet it was dead. It was more like a corpse than a living man, there was a little fluttering of life in it, but only that. Sardis was a hard place in which to grow a Christian church.

Yet there was something to be commended even in Sardis. There were a few among those called saints who were saints really. There were a few whose garments were unstained. They had learned the divine philosophy of living in the world and yet being not of it. They were not recluses; they walked the streets of Sardis about their daily duty. They did not become monks and nuns. They did not bury themselves out of their Sardis world. It was the Master's prayer for his disciples,

not that they should be taken out of the world, but that they might be kept from the evil. These saints in Sardis were kept from the evil. Their consciences were true. Their hands were clean. Their loyalty to Jesus was untarnished. They carried the garments of their souls so carefully that they were not draggled in the worldly Sardian mud.

Now, it is a blessed thought that when a man tries to do right and keep right, such attempt is never unnoticed. There is a story of a tired woman, who, driven by household duties, harassed and burdened by household cares, seeking sedulously to keep the wayward feet of her children in true paths, and discouraged at her apparent failures, and full of wonder why such heavy tasks were laid upon her, and wearied by the strain of her continual self-sacrifice, fell once into a troubled sleep; and in her sleep she dreamed, and in her dream she saw how, everywhere along the difficult way of life, she was attended by an angel who floated just at her right shoulder, and who, with

pleased and brightened face, wrote in a book he carried every slightest duty bravely done, every least sacrifice made ungrudgingly, every prayer which out of her weakness looked toward the divine strength; and the dream was an inspiration.

The dream did not put the matter wrongly, except as it told the great truth too partially and dimly. A presence better than angelic is around the struggler toward the right. The great Christ does not lose sight of those who seek to serve him. Nothing done for his sake is too slight a thing to claim his notice. These few who had kept their garments white in Sardis were in the special remembrance of the Master. Sitting upon the throne of the universe, he held them warmly in his heart. He deemed them worthy of peculiar mention. He knew the difficulty amid which they struggled. He cheers them by his promise. He has a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with him in white, for they are worthy.

These saints in Sardis suggest three lessons for us:

First—A man must be mightier than the difficulties confronting him. He must live purely even in Sardis.

Second—Temptation is no excuse for failure. Even in Sardis it was only the unstained saints for whom the Lord had praise.

Third—Temptations may be converted into helpful ministers. You are not to count yourself peculiarly unfortunate because you live in Sardis. Lilies deck themselves with silver extorted from the blackest mould. Contest with Sardian temptation, if it be but earnest, may be the best nutriment of the nobler life. The white-robed pass into whiteness through tribulation. Purity in Sardis means much. Said Jesus, They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. Said Paul, Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

## *TRIUMPH OVER THE FUTURE.*

WE are told that when the mob arrested the Lord Jesus in the garden, "Jesus, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth."

Into the future of which that mob was the frowning gate he passed not unknowing, as you and I must into ours, but knowing. Nor do the Scriptures allow us to restrict his fore-knowledge of the future to his own special experience of the death and resurrection and ascension which were to come. Constantly is this divine attribute of all-knowingness as to all men and all things ascribed to Christ in Scripture. In one place we read: But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men. And, now we are sure that thou knowest all things, is written in another Scripture.

Not knowing—is our word about the future. Knowing all things—is Christ's.

In one of the Conversations of a Saturday afternoon, which we often have in our church parlor, talking together of this very matter, one said, not in these words precisely, but in effect—the particularity of the Lord's knowledge of me, the fact that his shining vision draws its radiant circle round the “all things” that do touch me, and that can touch me, is a great help and comfort. Only, I am constantly hindered in the reception of the comfort it ought to bring me, by the impossibility of my conception of such sort of knowledge. I look at myself, and I find that I am dazed and dazzled by details. Just about myself alone, a single unit amid the multitude, there are so many “all things” to be known; there is such a multiplicity and complexity of detail even about myself. Then when I stand amid some thronging crowd and think of the “all things” which it is affirmed the Lord must know about every one of this mass of beings, separate and singular, there

is such an infinite bulk and tangle of detail that my poor thought breaks under the weight of it, and I cannot help wondering if the Lord's knowledge must not break under the burden of it too. And I cannot help questioning if some of the "all things" which now come to me, and are to come to me in the future, may not possibly slip out of and away from the including knowing of my Lord.

I am sure such skepticism of our future, grasped and held utterly in the attention of our Lord, is not uncommon.

The answer to it is two-fold, Scriptural and rational. The Scriptural answer is the constant statement of the Bible that all things and all men are held within the sensitive and certain knowledge of the Lord Christ.

The rational answer is that every human mind is seen by us to be great and overcoming, in just the proportion in which it is seen to be not dazed and baffled by detail. Notice and comprehension of detail is the very mark by which a great mind is

distinguished from a small one, even among ourselves. That man is mightiest in business who is mightiest in his memory and care of details, marshalling them to his money-making purpose. That man is mightiest in literature whose principles are the results of the widest and most accurate deduction from the most multifarious of observed and remembered details. That man is mightiest in war, in whose mind the farthest and minutest details of men and equipment and configuration of country, are the most closely and clearly grasped. Everywhere power of attention to detail is the signal of a capacious and shining intellect. That is the little head which forgets details, and blurs them and sees them but as undistinguishable meshes of unknown quantities.

Such all-knowledge then, of all things and all men, is a necessary attribute and quality of a mind infinite. That the Lord should know all things about the future, is proof that he is Lord. Even as the disciples said: Now we are sure that thou knowest all

things; by *this* we believe that thou camest forth from God.

But there is another very precious truth about this “going forth” of our all-knowing Lord. Our Lord goes into the future, not only knowing the “all-things” of it, but also, that he may use himself in that future for the help and defense of those who trust him.

I do not know a more pathetic word in all the Scripture than this which tells the answer of Jesus to that mob, and the reason of his answer. Jesus answered: I have told you that I am he; if, therefore, ye seek me, let *these* go their way; that the saying might be fulfilled which he spoke, of them which thou gavest me have I lost none. “If, therefore, ye seek *me*, let *these* go their way,”—all the sacrificial cadences of the atonement sound in that sentence. All the wonder, and the pathos, and the self-upyielding of the cross is there. I go unto the future knowing all things, and I go that I may cover and protect those who trust me; that I may lose none of them; that I may use

that future for them, even though I clearly see it holds the cross with its horrid clasping of death and shame. O ! Sacred Head now wounded, knowing it all, thou enterest the future that the thorns may cut thy brow, and thus a crown of life encircle the brows of these.

Grasp the double meaning of this great Scripture, disclosing so plainly the inner heart of our great High Priest. While we cannot know our future, that future is yet held and kept in the grasp of an Infinite Intelligence, and in the hand of an Infinite Sacrificial Heart. Divine knowledge, divine love—it is under such control that the misty years to come are held.

Faith, then, in the Infinite mind, and in the Infinite heart, is our victory over the future. Even in this narrow present, I may win it. Through faith in such a Christ, though I can stand only in the little vanishing what is, I may conquer beforehand all that is to come.

I was studying crystals not long since in an admirable cabinet. There were shown

me some diamonds in the rough, just as some eye had seen them, and some hand had seized them amid the gravel in South Africa. I do not think you could have told them for diamonds. All their wonderful far-shooting gleams and inward fires of lustre were hidden. They needed the emery-wheels and the fierce attrition of their own diamond dust to clean off their scratches, to remove the microscopic particles clinging to their sides, to straighten the ruder lines of their crystallization, that all the glory brimming in their hearts might get chance for flashing out. If those diamonds are to become what they might become, the future must hold for them the whirling emery-wheels and the harsh filing.

Yes, that is so. And I am sure, also, that this is so, that if ever I am to be conformed to the image of his Son, I must meet the emery wheels and culturing diamond dust of trial.

But of this, too, I may be sure; Infinite intelligence and Infinite sacrificial love holds all the future, and no wheel that is to

whirl within it shall turn even once too many times.

Trust in such knowing, and such loving,  
can disarm the future.

## *WHEN FAITH IS TRIED.*

THERE was Elijah by the brook Cherith. And it came to pass, after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. The truer rendering is, For the brook began to fail. Day by day it grew slender and slenderer still. At last, only a hot and muddied pool stood here and there amid the "staring stones" of the dried channel. What should Elijah do when the brook should be entirely gone? It was a faith test which had come to him. It was a faith test of the severest kind. For as Mr. Kitto has well said concerning it, "It is such slow processes that try faith most of all. Many possess the faith for sudden, great, heroic deeds, for one who can maintain his faith unshaken in the midst of such slow trials

as this." Day by day the brook failing. Day by day Elijah getting apparently nearer the torture and the death of thirst.

When you get into such a plight as this—as some time or other in your life you surely must; when your brook Cherith begins to dry away; when success begins gradually to pass into disaster and defeat; when hopes fail; when duty wears a hard and unrequiting look; when business shrivels because you will not be dishonest in it; when you seem to be strangely out of adjustment with your circumstances; hampered, hindered; and when you still feel that God has put you there by your brook Cherith, but has not yet opened for you a door into some better way or place—then, for such a time, let me commend to you the example of this servant of the Lord, Elijah. His faith stood the slow, hard test. He did not quit Cherith rashly and undirected because it was drying up; he did not go wandering round searching for some hap-hazard greener locality. He drank of the failing water, and took his bread from the

ravens, and waited. He was obedient to do the duty, and for the future he trusted God.

Thus are we to do under like circumstances. Not to grow despondent; not to become petulant; not to go foraging about for something wealthier, when we have the conviction that our place is still here by Cherith; but to stay there, drinking even of the failing, turbid, heated brook, and trusting God.

And as certainly as there came deliverance to Elijah, shall there come, from God's hand, deliverance to you. Wait on the Lord. Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord.

## *THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS.*

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### SOME STRUCTURAL FACTS OF LIFE.

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THE first is that of *difference*. It is wonderful to let the eye sweep over the central oceanic plains. The sensation is that of vastness and smoothness. The reach of plain is level almost perfectly. On to where the earth and the sky appear to meet, there is no intrusion of any ridge, or hill, or mountain. There is only one broad and equal expanse of sand and sage-bush, or of waving grass, and that is all. But that is not like life. Human society is not a level plain.

It is wonderful, as well, to stand under the shadow of the mountains. Take the range of the snowy mountains in the Valley of the Yellowstone—a succession of vol-

canic cones; some forced to the height of ten or eleven thousand feet above the sea; some of lowlier altitude. Between the mountains, dark and deep ravines. And as the peaks are different in height, so are they, as well, in shape. Some are pointed like the Swiss Aiguilles; some are rounded into a smoothness beautiful; some are jagged on their slopes, and awful with contorted surface. They are mountains, and yet the seal of difference is set upon them. Though belonging to the same range, they are individual. Your mountain range, and not your level plain—that is like life. Upon it the seal of difference is set.

This is the foundation idea upon which God has built society. Society is the mountain range, and not the level plain.

Men are different. Men are born different. Men are different in endowment, in providential appointment, in mental strength, in physical. Or, to come back to the Scripture, always true to the facts of life: For the Kingdom of Heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who

called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

Difference—that is a fact of life.

But there is another structural fact of life equally evident. This is *similarity*. Though the mountains are different from the plain and different from each other, they are similar in this—that they all do rise out of the plain; that they are all made up of varying amounts of the same substances—of rocks and sand and trees and snow. Different they are, yet similar. Thus is it too with men and women. They are similar in the fact that they all partake of the same humanity. They are also further similar in this: unlike as they may be in brain and body, in strength or in weakness, in providential opportunity, or comparative want of chance—in all that which goes to make up what we may call the endowment of a human being—they are alike in this, that everybody has some brain,

some strength, some skill, some opportunity.

Or, to come back again to the Scripture, and to use the comprehensive Scriptural word, while, according to their several ability, one servant may be entrusted with five, another with two, and another with only one—all are yet entrusted with some talent. Different as men and women are, they are yet, in as deep and real a way, alike.

Here is a third structural fact of life—*responsibility*. Different each from each, we are, in amount of talent; similar each to each, we are, in the possession of some talent. And over every one, each and all, arches this firmament of responsibility. Every man has an idea of the *ought*. “Thou *oughtest* therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then, at my coming, I should have received mine own with usury.” *Thou oughtest*—there is something in the heart of every one which springs immediately responsive. *Ought*—that is the lordliest word and the weightiest any man can

speak. When a man comes to this consciousness—I ought—that is the end of argument. It is the expression of responsibility. It is the tugging of the tie which binds man to God. It is the grip of God on man.

That man has it—this inborn, instinctive feeling of responsibility upward and Godward, is a huge and perfect argument against the notion that man is nothing more than a development, an evolution of the brute.

And this is further to be said concerning this matter of responsibility, that by no means can it be gotten away from, or excuse made before its judicial and constant inviolability.

That was a very common thing to do in ancient and Eastern society,—dig a hole in the ground, and put one's money in it and cover it, so that none but the owner could find it. A man then was very often his own banker.

One of the saddest signs of the financially sad times through which we have

been passing, has been that so many professedly Christian men have been faithless to their trusts, and have made the depositories for people's money now—savings banks and life insurance institutions—not so safe as a hole in the ground.

Well, one of these servants in the parable took his talent and put it in the ground. That is to say, he did not use his talent for his Lord's sake—for his Lord's glory. He was false to this fact of responsibility. And for this falseness nothing could excuse him.

If he did not wish the trouble of its use for his Lord's sake, and was lazy, and would rather let it lie in the ground than bother with it—this did not excuse him.

If he feared mistake, that in attempting to increase his talent for his Lord, he might lose it instead of doubling it, and therefore thought the safest thing to do was to refuse to use it, letting it lie there in the ground—this nervous, morbid fear of mistake and possible mischief did not in any wise excuse him.

If, as he said he did, he had really fallen

into wrong conceptions about his Lord, esteemed him a hard man, reaping where he had not sown and gathering where he had not strewn—if, filled with such false conceptions of his Lord, he had therefore missed his duty—these wrong conceptions did not excuse him.

If, as is more probable, he himself conjured up such a false notion of his Lord's character, in order that he might throw the blame for his failure over on to his Lord's shoulders—just as men do now, saying God is severe, hard, vengeful, we cannot serve him—if this was his idea, as I think most probable, why, notwithstanding, he could not get the blame for failure even on his Lord's shoulders; it would stay on his own.

In no way could he dodge responsibility. Falseness to trust brought doom.

And it is worthy of notice that this whole parable points its warning and admonition not toward the misuse, but severely and simply toward the non-use of that with which the servant was entrusted. As a most thoughtful commentator has sug-

gested, the sin against which Christ admonishes his disciples here, is not that of the unjust steward, for here is no wasting of goods; nor that of the prodigal, for here is no riotous living; nor that of the unmerciful servant, for here is no indifference to humanity. The sin against which Christ admonishes his disciples here is simply the sin of *neglect*; of, for any reason whatsoever, omitting to use whatever of endowment God may have conferred upon one. Non-use is a sin as utterly as misuse. Neglect is as wrong as defiant disobedience. The pivot-word in the parable is this—*unprofitable servant*; servant false to this fact of responsibility through non-use.

This, then, is the third structural fact of life: Thou oughtest therefore. Trusts of whatever sort from God are to be used for God. This solemn over-arching of responsibility is something unescapable.

Here is a fourth structural fact of life—*opportunity*. “Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers.”

There was no need, O servant, that my

talent, which I gave to thee in trust, lie ignobly in a hole in the ground, resting in non-use. You were not, in any wise, compelled to such administration of your trust; the door of opportunity stood open. There were exchangers on every side.

And what was true for this servant is true for everybody. Next door to everybody there is some sort of an exchanger.

You may not be put in trust by God in the same kind or to the same degree as others. That is true. Men are different. You are entrusted by God in some kind and to some degree, as also others are. That is true. Men are similar.

You ought to use all that with which you are entrusted for God's glory. That is true. If you take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, you can not escape the dominion of responsibility.

For the use of that with which you have been entrusted—for the productive investment of your talent toward God's glory, there is waiting for every one some ex-

changer. That is true. Within reach of everybody's hand there is the door of some opportunity.

So then our study of this parable reveals to us these four structural facts of life: difference, similarity, responsibility, opportunity.

## *TRUE WORSHIP.*

**T**RUE worship is something universal. It is to be in everything. It is for all times and for all spots.

The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father—were our Lord's words to the Samaritan woman. Jew and Samaritan had been fighting about places for worship. Jesus comes to say, neither this place nor that place—but all places for it.

We are all of us more Jewish or Samaritan than we think. We are all of us rearing our Jerusalems or clinging to our Gerizims. We are all of us sectionalizing religion—gathering it to special places, special times, special things; calling these sacred, those profane.

There was an old man in New England who combined the occupations of farmer,

horse dealer, and colporteur. In his "works of mercy," as he called them, he distributed tracts gratuitously, sold Bibles and other religious books at cost to those who could pay for them, gave them away to those who could not. "But," said the old man—not flippantly, as it might seem, but earnestly—"when I start on a work of mercy and stop to deal in horses I never have good luck; the fact is, *I don't want the Lord around when I'm trading horses.*"

There it is. The tract and Bible distribution was that man's Gerizim or Jerusalem; but worship held simply there would not prevent him from being over sharp in a bargain when horses were in question. That is sectionalizing religion; piling up Gerizims and building Jerusalems for it; forgetting its universality.

There was a tottering colored man who gained his living by cobbling shoes. His work was not elegant; he was not deft-handed; but he was thorough. Said one to him, "My friend, after this cobbling on earth is done, how about the other world ?

Have you any hope for a better world?" "Ah, master," answered he, "I am nothing, as I told you, but a poor cobbler; but I feel when I sit here that the Good Master is looking at me, and when I take a stitch, it is a stitch, and when I put on a heel-tap, it is not paper but good leather."

That is the true and Christian idea as over against the Jewish or Samaritan. Religion not in Jerusalem or Gerizim only, but religion in everything. Worship not only in special places and about certain things, but worship in all places and about all things. True worship is neither in this mountain nor in that, but is in this *and* that and in all others. It is an atmosphere in which the whole life is to breathe and live and be carried on. It has to do with Saturday as well as Sunday; with the bargain as well as with the prayer; with the table of the daily bread as well as with the table of the Lord.

They say that two million tons of the purest silver are held in solution by the sea, enriching each drop of its waters. It is

thus that a pure worship is to interpenetrate the life, touching and glorifying its shyest thought, its most common action. True worship is for Jerusalem and for Gerizim and for Nazareth, too. It is for church and street. It is for sacrament and for the daily service of the store, or shop, or school, or home.

## *FAITHFULNESS IN HUMBLE PLACES.*

**T**HAT is a very tender story concerning faithfulness in humble places which Jean Ingelow has related for us.

It was in one of the Orkney Islands, far beyond the north of Scotland. On the coast of this island there stood out a rock, called the Lonely Rock, very dangerous to navigators.

One night, long ago, there sat in a fisherman's hut ashore, a young girl toiling at her spinning-wheel, looking out upon the dark and driving clouds, and listening anxiously to the wind and sea.

At last the morning came; and one boat, that should have been riding on the waves, was missing. It was her father's boat. And, half a mile from the cottage, her father's body was found, washed up upon

the shore. He had been wrecked against this Lonely Rock.

That was more than fifty years ago. The girl watched her father's body, according to the custom of her people, till it was laid in the grave; then she lay down on her bed and slept. When the night came she arose and set a candle in her casement, as a beacon to the fishermen, and a guide. All night long she sat by the candle, trimmed it when it flickered down, and spun.

As many hanks of yarn as she had spun before, for her daily bread, she spun still, and one hank over, for her nightly candle. And from that time to the time of the telling of this story, for fifty years, through youth, maturity, into old age, she has turned night into day. And, in the snowstorms of winter, in the serene calms of summer, through driving mists, deceptive moonlight, and solemn darkness, that northern harbor has never once been without the light of that small candle. However far the fisherman might be standing out to sea, he had only to bear down straight for that

lighted window, and he was sure of safe entrance into the harbor. And so, for all these fifty years, that tiny light, flaming thus out of devotion and self-sacrifice, has helped and cheered and saved.

Surely this was finding chance for service in a humble place. Surely this was lowliness glorified by faithfulness. Surely the smile of the Lord Christ must have followed along the beams of that poor candle, glimmering from that humble window, as they went wandering forth to bless and guide the fishermen, tossing in their little boats upon the sea.

Surely there is for every one of us a place and chance to guide and help as great as that. Certainly we may, at least, keep shining at the window of our lives, how lowly soever they may be, the truth we feel and know. Certainly there are some at home, in store, on street, upon whom those beams will fall; certainly such light shall yield them help, courage, guidance.

No Christian's chance can be so slim and small that the simple and constant shining

of a Christian faith and hope will not illuminate somebody's darkness, will not serve somebody for leading and for cheer. And if we cannot be some great, strong Eddystone Lighthouse, furnished with patent reflectors, and flinging its rays across the waves for forty miles, guiding the mighty steamers and the huge ships, let us not refuse to keep the little light of a steady and humble Christian profession burning at our small window.

Some weary, doubting, toiling fisherman shall see it and be glad. And it were worth the living to have led and pointed even such an one into safe harbor.

## *DIFFICULT DUTY.*

**T**HAT is a suggestive incident, of the rod changed to a serpent and the serpent to a rod again.

God has called Moses to a threatening duty. All sorts of obstacles marshal themselves before it; Egypt is a powerful kingdom; Moses has already offended the throne; the Israelites are greatly valuable to the Egyptians. Besides, Moses is not eloquent, and thus is himself unable to impress upon the people the fact of his divine commission. Every way he seems to himself to be unequal to the towering task.

So Moses sets himself to manufacture a whole chapter of excuses. We are very often like him. Our humility is astonishing when a difficult duty confronts. We are quite ready to slander ourselves even. We are ready to yield the slightest assump-

tion of power. We are on the hunt for opiates for conscience. Moses does not stand alone in his searches for excuses.

But God teaches him, in significant symbol, the true method of accomplishment. Moses is standing with a shepherd's crook in his hand. "What is that in thy hand?" God asks. "A rod," says Moses. A shepherd's crook, the symbol of his present condition. "Cast it on the ground," is the command. It becomes a serpent—something dangerous and formidable, from which Moses fled, exactly typifying the difficulty of his duty, and his own repugnance to it.

A serpent was a common Egyptian emblem. Moses was well versed in the learning of the Egyptians. He knew and felt the meaning of this transformation. It was Egypt which was thus not obscurely pointed out as the enemy of God and of the chosen people; and as Moses fled from the serpent, he feared to grapple with the hostile Egyptian power. "Put forth thy hand and catch it," is yet again the divine com-

mand. Moses obeys. At once the serpent is in his hand a rod—the symbol of authority. The shepherd's crook is now the rod of God, with which Moses is to triumph over the serpent and lead God's people out of Egypt into the promised land.

The teaching is significant and evident. "What is formidable to weak faith and hesitating obedience, becomes a rod of power as soon as the decisive act is done."

*First*—Often before us rises duty difficult. It seems to us armed and hateful with the serpent's fang. We dread attempts towards its accomplishment, and flee as Moses did.

*Second*—Because we dread and flee, we are not thus able to pass out from the shadow of the command. That remains.

It is very often loosely said that God never appoints a duty for us for which we do not possess present ability. Nothing could be falser. We damage ourselves by sin; we drain our ability; we make ourselves unable to obey the command of God, and then imagine that God adjusts the

command to our weakened power. But God changes not, nor does His law.

Duty is duty, whether we are unable to accomplish it or not. The man who has so started a craving for liquor in himself that he cannot live except to satisfy it, is not, therefore, excused for his drunkenness. He may flee from and dread the serpent duty of reform, and say he cannot, but it is not the less true that he ought.

*Third*--At the moment of an obedient attempt at difficult duty, a divinely-granted supernatural power comes down to lift weakened ability up to the measure of the command. There is the serpent--dangerous, hostile, dreaded. God orders Moses to grasp it. When that is done, the serpent becomes a rod. It is overcome. It is no longer dangerous. It is no longer hostile. The duty which the serpent symbolizes, Moses did accomplish through the Lord his God. He did overcome Pharaoh. He did shatter the shackles which bound his countrymen. He did lead them through the winding wilderness journey. He did con-

duct them to the gates of the promised land. The serpent duty, through the divine aid down-falling, was accomplished.

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me—that is only the New Testament explanation of the Old Testament symbol.

*Fourth*—The serpent, a symbol of difficult and distasteful duty, when grasped, becomes a rod—the symbol of authority and power. Obedient grappling with duty, however difficult soever, reacts upon the character, strengthens it in goodness, uplifts it, crowns it. Contest with the serpent sin puts into a man's hand the rod of power over sin.

The weakest of us need not despair. Through Christ we may compel the serpent even, into a ministry toward our growth and strength.

## *RELIGION IN THE HOME.*

THE holiest and highest place for any man is his own house. If he is to serve Christ anywhere, he ought to serve him there first and chiefly. If the light of religion is to glorify any place, its sweetest and whitest radiance should centre there; for the home is the place of relationships the closest, the sacredest, the most controlling.

Look at some of these relationships. Somehow amid the world's crowd, two hearts have found each other out. By strange and subtle magnetism they have been attracted each to each. For them the double life blends into a single, larger life. Husband and wife they stand together—he to be to her the king; she to be to him the queen, graced and garlanded, in an equal royalty. The husband—he has promised her affection undivided, purity untarnished,

devotion unwasting, a manly arm to protect, a manly strength to lean upon, a manly energy and skill and capacity to support. He has told her she may trust him—and with a trust so utter that she may dare to stake upon it the wealth of her affection, her hopes of happiness, the sanctity of her womanhood—her whole destiny.

I wonder if we think enough of what a woman risks by marriage. For a man it is a critical circumstance; but for a woman it is unspeakably momentous. A man has other things with which to fill his hands and time,—his business, the struggle of the daily life, the necessary mingling with the great world. His life sweeps a wider circle. The wreck of the home cannot be so direful a thing for him, terrible as it must be. But the woman leaves everything to find her whole life in a home with him. She shuts behind her the old parental door. She lays off from herself the name her parents gave her. She has cut herself, as no man ever can cut himself, away from

old associations. At this man's call, she brings her life, and risks it at his feet.

And coming thus, walking fearlessly, lighted by the torch of love, among the shadows of such a risk, she promises to be a help-meet for him; she pledges that in one place he shall not be misunderstood; that at one fountain, sympathy shall never fail; that through the various experiences of life, her heart shall strike constant chime with his.

So, in these two hearts thus married into one, the home begins. Bound together in a union the closeness of which can be illustrated in no way so well as by that mystical union which subsists between the believer and his Lord, the two separate rills of life, mingling to form a deeper and broader river, flow on. And then, flowing out of this relationship, another relationship arises. God puts a babe into the parents' hands; another life has issued out of theirs, to draw from theirs its sustenance, to get from theirs its bent, to receive from theirs its deepest and most lasting culture,

to take from theirs more absolutely and awfully than from any other source, the shaping of its eternal destiny.

So do these relationships of the home stand furthest back and deepest down of any. It is back here in the home that the springs of life are found. The home stands behind the church. It ought to be home first, and church next, always. If religion is anywhere to make life sweet and pure and beautiful, of all places it should impart its sanctity back here amid the springs of life welling up in the home. Make the fountain sweet, and the waters will be sweet. Sanctify the home, and you sanctify the fountain. First of all, certainly then, because of these relationships so sacred and so profound, are we bound to carry into our homes before all other places the patience and the sweetness and the sacrifices and the peace of religion.

## *RELIGION AND HOME LIFE.*

SACRED and clasping as are our home relationships, their very commonness and constancy are apt to induce a kind of forgetfulness of them. It is a law of life that continuance of impression results in lack of sensibility. Mr. Ruskin tells us that of all people in the world, those are least alive to the majesty of the mountain height, to the solemnity of the mountain shadow, to the serenity of the mountain peace, who dwell among the mountains. It is the man who is not born in God's great temple of the Alps, and can bend in the presence of those white altars only now and then, who is the most deeply smitten with their awe and subdued unto their sanctity. Constant repetitions of impressions produce for the Swiss inhabitant dullness of sensibility.

What is true there is true everywhere.

The pressure and contact of these home relationships is so constant that one is in danger of becoming wonted into heedlessness of them. One may go on here in easy violation of duty, in daily forgetfulness of the holiest promises, because of a stupid dullness of sensibility. It needs the constant quickening of religion; it needs the fresh alertness of a religious spirit that goes through life with the constant question, "How can I please my Lord," to keep the nerve of sensibility alive and thrilling to the uninterrupted touch of those home relationships.

We need religion in our homes, too, because of the closeness of the bonds binding us together there. It is a common proverb, and it is as true as it is common, that no man is a hero to his own valet. We are not angels; we are only men and women, and we share the imperfections of manhood and womanhood. We are not perfect apples; we are speckled apples, all of us. I do not care how deep and sweet and tender and accordant love may render the

home life, it cannot but happen that in the close contact, in the every-day openness and disclosure of the home, our bad points will come out. No family is made up of perfectly straight sticks, but crooked ones. And when they are piled together in the closeness of home life the crookedness will appear. The man and woman married the most utterly, married along the whole line of their natures, must yet find some point where there is not complete contact. There is dissimilarity of taste, dissimilarity of temper, there has been dissimilarity of education. Before musicians can pour forth a perfect harmony, they must bring their instruments into tune. Before two hearts can perfectly strike together, they must be keyed to the same note, and that cannot be altogether done before marriage. The exact real self does not appear in courtship. It is the best self, the self dressed in the best wardrobe of manners and sentiment and sacrifice that appears then. After marriage the self puts on its common habits and appears for what it is. Then each real self

must adjust itself to each real self; then must each bear and forbear. Then must any incompatibility be met and mastered by a mutual charity which suffereth long and is kind, which never faileth.

Now it is just here in this closeness and disclosure of the home that religion is most needed. One must enter into the Christian method of finding life by losing it; the soul must possess itself with the sweetness of a Christian patience. A Christian love must put its foot upon the neck of any miserable pride of self-assertion and keep it there. A Christian confession of wrong, and a Christian forgiveness of wrong, must be as quick or spontaneous as the breath. Christ in calmness, in tenderness, in self sacrifice, must dwell in the heart of each. Then shall that home be Christian. Then the nearest symbol of the Heaven for which we yearn shall be that earthly home. Of all places, it is the home which must get on the worst without religion.

## *A CHANCE FOR SERVICE.*

**A**LMOST the last command which Jesus gave was this: Feed my lambs. It is well enough to think what a large opportunity for Christian service must open for any one of us through obedience to this command.

John Falk of Weimar was a great Christian. It was a terrible time in Weimar. Napoleon the Great was scathing Europe. The dark nights of winter were lighted with burning homesteads. Almost all the men in the little duchy were driven off to the wars and killed. Plague and famine were ravaging. Orphans were numbered by the thousand; in one small village sixty orphans wept both parents.

John Falk himself had a brood of six sweet children. He could not keep the pestilence from smiting them. Four out of

the six were carried off, and, as he declared, he buried with them the best part of his own life in their graves.

But what did John Falk do? Uselessly bewail his fate and sit in sackcloth with folded hands? Call God cruel, and declare that Providence was a grand mistake? No. John Falk was a great Christian. He heard this command of Christ: Feed my lambs. He would obey it. He gathered the homeless children off the streets and waysides. He took them for his own. "Come in," he cried, "God has taken my four angels and spared me that I might be your father." And out of that beginning sprang the "Inner Mission" of Germany, which in orphanages and training schools has spread the kindly roof of Christian homes over thousands of homeless children, and been a large element in making Protestant Germany the mighty nation she has become.

Now of course I do not mean to say that we ought all of us to do, or that we all can do, as John Falk did. Our necessity is not the same. Our circumstances are different.

But I do mean to say that we all of us have a chance for Christian service just there where John Falk found his.

We are very sentimental in our religion. As Falk himself once wrote, "We all like the glory on Tabor, but we cannot bear to spend our nights in Golgotha." We glow with fervors of feeling; we rejoice with meditative enthusiasm; we are stirred by sermons and lifted in emotion by the solemn voices of our sacred songs. Then in a vague and aimless way we go forth in longing toward some large service for our Lord. We dream, perhaps, that some day we may do some great thing for him. And then we straightway forget that the chances for the highest service are just as numerous as are little children about our way. Washington Irving tells somewhere a story about a man who determined that he would jump over a great mountain rather than walk over it. So he took a run of three miles to gather impetus, and when he reached the mountain could only sit down and rest, having no strength to jump. So we sometimes

gather ourselves in desire and emotion for some huge and impossible service, and, uselessly exhausting ourselves, refuse quietly to walk into the daily opportunities opening along our way. It is worth the learning to be willing to walk where we cannot jump.

Christ said: Feed my lambs. Quietly feed them, then. The children are all around you. The household is a place of the highest and largest service. What greater thing can any person do than, taking the parent's duty, train a child for a useful life on earth and for the heavenly glory? The Sabbath-school is a place of service. What larger opportunity can any person want than that of teaching the impressible minds and hearts of children the great truths of the kingdom?

It was a bitter Winter's day. Little Pat was standing behind the board on which lay his papers, waiting to sell them. A bright-faced and tender-hearted girl stepped up and bought one, and as she laid the money down she kindly asked, "Aren't you very cold?" "I was till you passed by,"

returned the boy. Exquisite answer. Her kind word had warmed through and through the little fellow's heart. Go thou and do likewise.

He who makes a child's heart brighter pleases and serves his Lord. He who said, Feed my lambs, said also, He that receiveth one such little child receiveth me; and he who said that, said also, Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these ye did it unto me.

He who serves a little child, for Jesus' sake, right in that service shall serve his Lord as well. How large a chance for service in the lowliest life !

## *WITH BOTH HANDS EARNESTLY.\**

IT was a sad time in which the burden of the Lord pressed upon the prophet Micah. It was a time of degeneracy, idolatry, public corruption ; evil was rising like a tide ; it was sweeping everything before it. "Woe is me," the prophet cries, "for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruit, as the grape gleaning of the vintage. The good man is perished out of the earth and there is none upright among men, and all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his neighbor, with a net. That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh and the judge asketh for a reward."

It is well for us to take note of the way

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\* This text, and to some extent the treatment, was suggested to me by a very admirable sermon on the same text by the Rev. Dr. Raleigh, which I advise everybody to read.

in which evil works "with both hands earnestly," and see to it that we work on the other side for our Christ "with both hands earnestly."

Some professing Christians work with neither hand. They have hands but they handle not, feet have they but they walk not. They are professing Christians. They have taken upon themselves the solemnest of vows. They have adjured themselves before presences and by sacred services, certainly as binding and momentous as is the oath exacted in a court of law, falsehood to which we call perjury, that they would "walk together in brotherly love as becomes the members of a Christian church, that they would not forsake the assembling of themselves together ; that they would endeavor to turn their kindred and acquaintance to the Saviour, to holiness and to eternal life ; that they would, according to their ability and opportunity as faithful stewards of the Lord, do good to all men, especially in helping to extend the gospel in its purity and power to the whole

human family." But as far as one can see, they seem to think, as a man told me flatly the other day, that a promise made to the church amounts to nothing.

They have many excuses. Business is very pressing or home cares are very absorbing. They have not been noticed as they should have been. They are very diffident. They have no talent. They have no influence. They are afraid they would do more harm than good. If they were placed as is such a one, or if they were gifted as is such other one, they surely would, but, being as they are and being who they are, it cannot be expected that they should keep their promise.

How sad a fact it is that, here in this world, ruined except as Christ saves it—that among so many standing on the very threshold of the kingdom, waiting for the kindly word, waiting for the grasp of welcome, ready to be stirred into the new life by a personal and loving witnessing for Christ's gospel, there are professing Chris-

tians who are working with neither hand.

There are some Christians working with *one hand*. That is immensely better than not to work with either. In this needy world no stroke of Christian work, how bungling and slight soever, can be well spared. I thank God for every one-handed worker even. But such are almost always Christians who have no steady and constant grip that holds. Such are intermittent Christians. They are tremendous in a revival. They will take fire easily and flame and work at a great rate. They will be "instant in season and out of season" for a while. But when the impulse has died away, somehow they die away with it, they cannot be depended on, they lack steadiness, they lose grip. So is it with the Sunday school, so it is with the prayer meeting, so is it with the church service. Such Christians are like the pea in the tricks of legerdemain. Now you see them and now you don't. They are one-handed. They cannot get a grip that holds.

Now I do affirm that the Christian who

gives himself the Lord's service thus only to with one hand does vastly more and better than the Christian who stands idle, working with neither hand. Some service is always better than none. A class gathered and taught for a single Sunday is better than a class never taught. One word spoken for Christ is better than no word. Occasional attendance at the prayer meeting or at the Sabbath services is better than non-attendance. Urging onward a Christlike plan for a little while is better than never urging it on at all. It is not the best sort of service; but it is better than nothing. Christians using one hand for their Lord are better than those who use neither.

Some Christians lend to the service of their Lord *both hands*. Ah, God bless them —the two-handed workers, the workers of grip and constancy. They are Christians who are at work under fair skies and under foul. They are Christians who are at work whether the tide runs out or runs in. They stand in their places and seize their duty, whether the spiritual thermometer

rises to blood heat or falls down below the zero and they must work in bitter weather. They understand that the Lord should be worshipped on a wet Sunday as well as on a dry. They stand by the Sabbath school and keep it going. They, when the blood is sluggish, chafe the chilled limbs of the church by their prayers and labors until the chilled limbs grow warm again. They stand by their duty in their own church, on whose altar they have laid their solemn pledge, and go not roaming round to other altars, neglecting service here because they are engaged in service there. They neglect not the gift that is in them. They do not manacle their hands by hindering excuses. They pray, they work, they give as God has prospered them. They do not do one thing and, because they have done one, refuse to do two things, three things or a dozen things. They say, "Let me do anything, everything, for my Lord Christ. Here are both my hands consecrated to His service." Ah, God bless them, these two-handed workers, the joy and solace of the

pastor's heart—these on whom he leans, as waking in the night watches praying for the church; he counts on and thanks God for and rejoices in them. Ah, God bless them again, these two handed workers. Distance does not scare them, rain does not frighten them, cold does not chill them, hindrances do not baffle them, distractions do not distract them. They have taken hold with both hands and so they keep hold. "Heaven's best blessing be on them," every pastor says, and I am sure that the angels who stand about the throne, and even He who sitteth on the throne, and who yet walketh amid the golden candlesticks of His church answers, "So let it be, Amen, Amen."

But consider further, that looking at the tactics of evil and learning from them, it is not enough that we do service for our Christ even with both hands. Evil is at work with both hands *earnestly*. So we must be for Jesus. That is what we need as much as the two-handed service—the earnest love behind it, which shall give to all our duty strange delightsomeness and

glow, and make it burn its way to victory. This is our sorest, deepest need. We cannot get it of ourselves, but we can get it given us. It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to furnish us with just this heart-touching, heart-compelling earnestness. Shall we not get it given?

## *THE VICTORY OF FAITH.*

**T**HAT is a very great Scripture ; this is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith.

Too frequently we read it wrong. I read it thus, for many years. I was wont to read it, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your *fight*." It is not fight, however, which overcomes, but faith. It was thus I discovered the real meaning of the Scripture :

It was one wintry day. The ground was snow-covered. I was passing along the street. My child, a little girl, was coasting with her sled. Some rude boys seized her sled. She had been in tussle with them. She could do nothing with the boys of herself ; they were too much for her. Just then she saw me coming round the corner.

Immediately she left the boys, sled, everything, and ran to me. "Papa," said she, "I want my sled." Then she was quite sure that she possessed it, because she knew that I was mightier than the boys, and could get it for her, and would. That was the victory which overcame the world of that childish trouble—even her faith. She put the whole matter in my hands, and by her faith in me, was conqueror.

Since then I have read this Scripture as it stands. The victory that overcometh is that of faith. Toward the temptations, toward the trials, toward the troubles of our lives, we are as helpless in ourselves as was my little daughter toward the boys who had seized her toy. Toward the temptations, toward the troubles, toward the trials of our lives, we may be as conquering as was my little daughter toward those boys. It is not needful that we be vanquished Christians. There is for us infinite resource.

It is faith, however, that unlocks it, and not fight. Carry your pain or peril to the

Lord, in the same definite, actual way in which my child carried her captured sled to me, and the might of Christ is pledged you. This is the secret of victorious Christian living. It was Paul's secret. "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the saith of the Son of God."

### *A COMMON ERROR.*

THAT the Christian life is all in the beginning. I am sure that the general thought, while it is not too much concerned about the beginning of Christianity in the soul—because it cannot be too much concerned about it—is not enough anxious about its subsequent development. It would have been just as wise for the ancient racer, after he had gone through the training process, and stripped himself for the contest, and entered the arena, and run on three steps, to have stopped there and declared the race won and himself entitled to the prize. Why, the judge would answer the race is but begun. Your preparation may have been assiduous and admirable, but it is the law of the arena that the entire course must be accomplished and

the prize adjudged as you shall have carried yourself around the whole circle. The race itself is the only test of your preparation and beginning.

But somehow we have too generally come to think that if we can only get a man to acknowledge his sinfulness and walk for a time in darkness, and then pass out into a better state of feeling; to break forth in joy and songfulness; to see new light in the sun, and fresh greenness in the grass; to profess trust in Jesus Christ—that then the whole race is run, the victor's crown is on the brow.

Now it may be that a man passing through such an experience has become a Christian, and it may be he has not. You cannot predicate Christianity altogether upon feeling. It is not all fervors, and raptures, and high excitements, and suffusions of sentiment. These may be the glorious door into the noble Christian life, and they may be the door into delusion. Christianity is deeper than feeling. Christianity is a changed nature. To be Christian is to

be a new creation in Christ Jesus. Christianity is the setting of the purposes towards God; it is resolute determination to arrange our action with, and not athwart, the will of God; it is living as ever in our great Taskmaster's eye. And so the only test of the truth of the beginning is the whole race succeeding. By their fruits ye shall know them, said the Saviour. The genuineness of the new life is to be judged of by what you do each day in your business, in your family, amid your pleasures—not so much by what you thought you felt on some dim day years back. Christianity is more life than a feeling. If the life bloom be other than Christian the strong presumption must be that the root out of which the life issues is other than Christian.

It is the Spring time, and I want flowers in my garden. I go to a seed store and ask for hyacinth bulbs. Unless my sense of smell be acute, the man may sell me onions instead of hyacinth bulbs. They look very much alike. I take them home and plant them, and water them, and watch them. If

instead of the perfumed pyramid of flowers I get some weed or vegetable, then I am sure I have not planted hyacinths. So it is with Christianity. Unless the bloom be Christian it is certain that the bulb is not. The only test of saintship is endurance in saintship. The beginning is not everything in Christianity.

## *CHRIST OUR ADVOCATE.*

**H**E is an Advocate sharing *our own nature.*

There are two ways of help. One way is worth little. The other is worth everything.

When the fight is going on, the General, standing in some distant and sheltered place, may command his troops to rush onward, toward the front. Possibly they may go. But the power of such command is surely something very different from the power of the call of sympathy, as when before the siege of Mons, the Duke of Argyle, seeing his men faltering, pushed among them, open-breasted, and exclaimed, "You see, brothers, I have no concealed armor, I am equally exposed with you. I shall require none to go where I refuse to venture.

Remember you contend for the liberties of Europe, and for the honor of your nation, which shall never suffer by my behavior, and I hope the character of a Briton is as dear to every one of you." Is it wonderful that the faltering ceased, that the work was carried?

There is slight help in that word "Go," from some one standing outside the difficulty and danger. There is immense help in that word "Come," from some one standing with us, confronting the same difficulty and danger. The last way of help is the only real way.

There was a boy beginning school. The teacher put him at a book most difficult for a boy. It was a volume of history. It was one of those dreary books consisting of isolated facts, piled together in no other order than the chronological; no more like a real history than a pile of split rails, lying by the roadside, is like a tree. That boy, now a man has never forgotten the kind of despair with which he sat down before that task. He was at the Greece por-

tion of it, and the page was full of Doric, Ionic and Corinthian architecture. The words were dim with mist. He could not understand. Now, his mother might have said, "My son, learn your lesson," and chastised him if he did not. She did no such thing. She said to him instead, "Come, my son, let us learn the lesson." Then, putting away whatever her hands were filled with, she would compel her large, bright, womanly faculties down to the measure of his weak and meagre ones. She would make the dull words of that page luminous with explanation. She would hunt out and chase away his ignorances and difficulties. She would draw out on paper what the boy could not get into his head, except he saw it, until the dreary history began to glow with interest as the boy's understanding fastened on what it told so dimly for a child's mind. That mother did not say, *Go*, she said *Come*, and standing there, identified herself with her child, and so gradually lifted him upward and onward.

This is but meagre illustration of the

great truth of Christ's identification with us. He is divine, yet human. He stands with us in our nature. He is not an advocate managing our case coldly and from a point outside of it. He is an advocate standing with us where we are; so to speak coming down out of His divinity and taking upon Himself our weakness and brokenness. He does not say, "Go;" he says, "I am sharer with you, come with me."

And out of this position or identification and share and sympathy, Christ has never passed. The nature which He took upon Himself when He lay a babe in His mother's arms in Bethlehem, He keeps upon Himself risen now into the heavens, seated upon the universal throne.

You remember that when Paul was coming to Damascus, intent on the persecution of the Church, and the light brighter than an oriental sun at noonday struck him down, he heard a voice saying, Saul ! Saul ! why persecutest thou me? and he replies, Who art thou Lord ? The voice came down to him out of the sky saying, I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest.

This was a most touching proof, as it has seemed to me, of the thorough identification of our great Advocate with us in our humanity. For what was Nazareth? It was the meanest town in Palestine. It was esteemed the off-scouring and disgrace of the country. It was the town about which the proverb went about, Can any good come out of Nazareth? The most cutting gibe which they could fling at Jesus during His life on earth was just this, that He was a Nazarene. And we find Him at the right hand of God, Jesus of Nazareth still.

He wears in heaven the very titles He wore on earth ; He keeps yet to what men would call the disgrace of his earthly state. He has severed no tie which bound him to the poorest and the meanest, though now upon His brow there flashes the diadem of the universe. He is the same Christ, standing in our nature to-day in heaven as literally as when He sank there at the well's mouth in Samaria. Christ is our brother, and standing in brotherhood with us, He is

our Advocate. Here surely is certainty of sympathy, of infinite regard.

We have an Advocate *armed with a prevailing plea*. The Scripture about this title smacks of court forms. We are on trial at the bar of God. Every human soul is in such a case. The definition of sin compels us to face this mighty fact. According to the Scriptures, sin is not a misfortune into which a man has somehow blamelessly fallen. According to the Scriptures, sin is not a disease to the contagion of which man has somehow exposed himself. According to the Scriptures sin is the transgression of the law. God is law-giver. God, as law-giver, has promulgated law and sanctioned it with penalty. It is a perfect law, since God who gave it is perfect. It is an unchangeable law, since God who gave it is unchangeable. It is an inexorable law, for being perfect and unchangeable, it can make but one demand, viz., perfect obedience to its perfect requirements. If man present no such answer of complete obedience, then only this can follow, that the penalties of

the law blaze forth. And since God has given this perfect, unchangeable, inexorable law, He must execute its penalties or stultify Himself.

Now sin is the transgression of this law, and man is sinner because he has transgressed it. He has not returned the answer of an unflawed obedience ; he has refused obedience. The conscience is proof of this. Conscience is God's vicegerent. When it has said, Thou oughtest, the man has answered, I will not. Thus man stands in God's great court arraigned ; the law is against him, conscience is against him, he is speechless—helpless. But now we have an Advocate armed with a prevailing plea. What is His plea ? Himself ; he is one with us ; he is our brother ; he stands in our nature. But like humanity in all else, He is unlike humanity in this,—he is not a transgressor of the law. He is a keeper of it ; He has met its requirements ; He has suffered, and exhausted the penalties of it. This is His plea in the presence of its violated majesty—Himself. While man is

condemned before the law, because he has no plea to offer, the law itself is condemned in the presence of our Advocate, because He has every plea to offer—Himself. The law is satisfied in Him, because He has endured its penalties. The law is honored in Him, because He has perfectly obeyed it. The plea prevails. God can be just, and yet the Justifier. Every man and woman who by faith will gather within the shelter of that plea, is saved forever more.

## *THE FATHER'S HOUSE.*

**I**N my Father's house are many mansions, said Christ to the disciples. Let us think of some of the truths these words imply.

*It is a house of the Living.* Through every one of these most precious verses hereabouts pulses, as the blood does heart-driven through the arteries, the truth of the other and the blessed life. The Father's house—house? that is the place for the living; tombs are places for the dead. The Father's house in which the dwellers live; the many mansions through which the dwellers range; the promise of intimate and constant companionship, “Where I am there ye shall be also,”—all these words are figures of *being*. They imply and declare the truth of a veritable, grand, strong, joyous life.

Materialists may so affirm, but this pres-

ent life is not the whole of life. It is but a small arc of life's great circle which dips downward here. These passing days, these experiences of joy and sorrow, these changing radiances of success and glooms of failure, are but the variously carved and colored vestibule of the great eternal Temple.

Toward this truth of the immortal life there is the pointing of many arguments and analogies. Here, for instance, is some creature—the horse; the dog; the eagle, beating the distant blue with his strong pinions. For that creature, so far as we can see, there is an open sphere and chance commensurate with its capacity. It can exhaust its utmost capability of being in this present. It can find full food and furnishing for its lower nature. Enough for it the grass, the sun, the air, and the simple chance to be among them. But with man there is immeasurable difference. We overmeasure this present. The smallest soul is vaster than the world. There is nothing in the whole world to

quiet the hunger of the smallest soul. I have seen oaks set in boxes ; but, pitiable pygmies because they had not root-room. We are like the trees planted in a box you can place in your parlor upon the window ledge. Men are hindered, men are cramped. "Toward men," says one, "there is so utter a disparity as to be ludicrous, were it not unspeakably sad, between his vast capacities and desires on the one hand, and his narrow stage and brief span of living on the other." There are those words of Newton which every school-boy knows, how in this little life he could only say, "I seem to myself to be but as a child, picking up but here and there a shell or pebble on the shore, while the great ocean of truth is all unexplored before me." This is the question, Does God work falsely toward our longings ? Does he implant them for the sake of disappointing them ? Must Sir Isaac always stay a child ? Does death quench him ? May no ship of human investigation ever push out upon those unknown waves ? Nay, God does not work

falsely. Men need another life to satisfy the longings this life has started, but cannot still.

There is a chrysalis. Some are hanging now in my study. I have placed them there, waiting for their maturity, to see the sort of life that shall come out of them. It was a low worm-life the creature had months ago. It could not fly; it could not move swiftly; it could only lie upon its leaf and eat. Then when its time came, it spun itself a kind of tomb. It hung it by slender threads dangling from the tree-branch. It laid itself within it, and with doors of silk shut out the winter cold. Now it waits there. A strange change has passed upon it. It is a worm no more; it is a chrysalis. But a change stranger still shall come to it. It shall issue, a winged creature, glorious with colors, scaling the loftiest flower for the honey which shall be its food.

Men say, "See there, do you think that God would do that for an insect and not do it for a man? This is the worm-life; the

tomb is the human chrysalis. Beyond it there must be ampler life, nobler sustenance, better being."

Then, too, there is the other argument springing from rewards and punishments. Not here do the scales swing evenly. Not in this life does the Psalmist question, which must often be ours as well, get answered, "Lord, how long shall the wicked triumph? How long shall they utter and speak hard things? Yet they say the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." Intertwined with our deepest natures, there is a feeling indestructible that the Lord does see—that the God of Jacob must regard. The good—that which ought to be, must triumph over the evil—that which ought not to be. It does not perfectly in this life. There must be another life in which it shall.

Such are a few, hastily outlined, of the many arguments and analogies which point toward the life to come. But, when the shadow of death falls black and chill around us; when those we love go forth

into the darkness, and though we call ever so passionately, nothing but the echo of our cry comes back; when we count the stealing years; when men feel that their noon has passed, and that only the western windows of their lives are open to them; when the fingers of disease are tugging at their heart-strings, breaking them one by one, then it cannot be denied that there are troops of sad analogies which seem to point toward our eternal setting.

Drifts of blossoms whiten the apple tree in the spring sunshine, but only comparatively few go on successfully into fruitage. Why not thus with men? The emergence of the larva into the butterfly seems to be a grand exception to the usual order. Why are we to argue from the exception? What are we to say to the terribly preponderating rule? And then, besides, in the chrysalis there has been no real and thorough death —simply change and dormancy. Within our present horizon human life does not pass downward into death and then upward into resurrection; it simply passes

downward into death. What can we do but ask ourselves, and wait and wonder after all?

But it is not needful that we waste our time and thought in argument and counter-argument. We know we have one masterful reason for our faith. Christ brought life and immortality to light. We have seen Him one of ourselves, a sharer in our nature, entering life as we do, through the door of birth. We have seen him die as one of us would die, fastened to a cross and with the spear thrust through His heart. We have seen Him buried, as some day we shall be, when our time comes. And, then we have seen Him burst the bars of the tomb and the bonds of death. It is death's Victor who is speaking. He says, Let not your hearts be troubled. He says, In my Father's house are many mansions. He says, "I will lift you thither."

Therefore even the tomb startles not. Death is not state; it is transition. The Father's House is a house of the living.

Also the Father's House is a *House Enduring*.

Change—that is the law here. All is in constant flux and flow. What we call stable turns, at last, to instability.

I read lately of a lighthouse anchored on a reef on the Jersey shore—one of the most important along that difficult line of coast—whose bright flame has saved many a mariner from wreck. But in twenty years the tide-line has climbed upward to that lighthouse many feet, and now the waves are undermining it. What men had built so strongly is getting swiftly changed to weakness.

I have gazed upward at the Swiss Aiguilles, pushing their rocky needle-points thousands of feet into the blue. But even granite cannot stand unchanged, though it force itself above the mountains. Every year the frosts pry huge splinters off, and the vast ice-files of the glaciers grind the mountains down.

Here is a crowd of people thronging one of our great streets, jostling each other, pushing onward, intent on business or pleasure. Stand amid that crowd and think

ahead but ten short years, and that street, so thronging now, would be passed along but by a little straggling company, did not others come to fill the places of the multitudes whom death shall by that time have swept onward into the unreturning change. But think a moment of the companions of your boyhood; how many are represented now by graves folded upon the hillside, rather than by living men! Then, too, what a king Change is over the narrow space of this present life. How position and possession come and go, and go and come, or go and refuse again to come. How much that we think diamond has changed to dew, and vanished in our grasp.

Listen to these words: For we know that if our earthly house of this tent be taken down, we have a building of God—a house not made of hands—eternal in the heavens.

This is the picture in the words—a caravan toiling along some desert country; at last the night has come; the burdens are unbound from the camels' backs; the tents are lifted, and the tired travelers rest be-

neath them, while the night holds sway. But when the first rays of morning streak the east the travelers rouse themselves. The burdens are piled again upon the camels' backs ; the tents are taken down ; and the little city which the stars saw dotting the desert sands is not. Such is the earthly life. We pitch our tents, then strike them, now here, now there—change.

Some strong and noble dwelling founded upon a rock ; the winds blow and the floods beat but the house stands stable. It stands while a helpless infancy finds protection in its walls. It stands when manhood, weary with the fight of life, seeks a resting place within it. It stands when old age, helpless as infancy totters under the shadow of its roof. There it stands—a firm, fixed homestead, the heritage of the generations. That is the Father's House ; more fixed, more firm ; a building of God eternal in the heavens.

Also the Father's House is a house spacious. In my Father's House are many mansions—that is to say, dwelling places—

abiding places. Read the words over, and a feeling of roominess comes to you at once. His is a House of width, and chance and opportunity.

“ How blest we should be, we have always believed,  
Had we really achieved, what we nearly achieved.”

But we have not. The ideal haunts. The ideal is never caught. Baffled are we—beaten back, at best but prisoners of the actual. Longings are large but chance is small. Perhaps sickness chains you. You can only hear the hurry of busy feet coming past your chamber door. Perhaps poverty hampers you. Life is but a daily battle for the simple leave to be. Perhaps you find yourself in some hard prison, builded by the deeds of others. I have known many such. Women tied to drunken husbands; life is weighted; it has missed all its wings of hope. O for a breathing place, you say. I am stifled, I am hungry for culture, spiritual, intellectual. I am a bird with wings clipped. I can only tread the ground, when my feeling tells me I was made for the upper air.

But here is a message of chance and range. The father's House is spacious. It is no narrow place. No cell is builded in it. It is no hovel. It is a palace with room added on to room; with grass and fountains and gardens, green and great. It is wider than your widest thought. Sickness cannot hamper there—"neither shall there be any more pain." Poverty cannot hinder there—its streets are gold, its gates are pearl. Hope cannot be blighted there—"and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Desire shall not stand knocking at any gate flung to and bolted,—"in my Father's House are many mansions." Room, spaciousness, chance and capacity for development—these belong to the Father's House.

Also the Father's House is a House of Recognitions. We dwell here with divided hearts. Constantly are we called upon to make investment of our best treasure in the beyond. Surely sooner or later the shadow falls over every household. Death is mightier than marriage. He empties

cradles and you cannot tell him nay. Standing there at the tomb's door who can help the question, Shall we ever meet again? Shall we meet in the sweetness and intimacy of personal knowledge? Shall the broken tendrils which have been so clinging here ever be rejoined? Shall heart find refuge again in the heart that matches it? Shall we know each other there?

The Father's House is a House of Recognitions. See how the fact comes out in all the figures of that noble and immortal life. House—that means the place of the home. Dwelling-places—abiding-places—these are but other figures of the home. Home—that means familyhood, and that means intercourse founded upon recognition. The very terms of this revelation imply our knowledge of each other, the re-uniting of the old blessed earthly ties. The Father's House is a House of Recognitions.











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